

The Irish Catholic

MARY KENNY

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'Totally wrong' new tax on religious orders condemned

Ruadhán Jones and Chai Brady

It is "totally unacceptable" and "wrong" that a new tax meant to tackle land hoarding is being applied to religious orders vowed to poverty, politicians have said, while religious leaders warn it could "seriously impact" their way of life.

The tax could force orders to fork out thousands of euro, after draft maps from local councils included a number of convents and monasteries.

Cork TD Michael Collins said it is a "terrible wrong" that enclosed orders who are vowed to poverty, should face the tax, which is intended to tackle companies and individuals hoarding land that could be used to build houses.

The issue came to light after An Bord Pleanála slapped down a plea from the Poor Clares in Cork City to exempt them from the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT).

"This order has been in Cork for decades and decades. I would think that's totally unacceptable that they are being faced with this concern and worry on them," Mr Collins told *The Irish Catholic*.

Local Fianna Fáil TD Padraig O'Sullivan has vowed to bring the Poor Clare's case before the Minister for Finance, saying "common sense has to prevail".

"When [the tax] was first envisaged, I don't think anomalies like this would have been foreseen... if there's anything I can do, I'll make representation for them."

In a statement to this paper, Cork City Council said their hands are tied by the restrictions handed down to them by the Government's RZLT legislation.

"The legislation surrounding the mapping is strict with little discretion offered to local councils," a council spokesperson said.

"While lands used for the purposes of a church are

» Continued on Page 2

Service of light...



Pictured taking part in the Irish Kidney Association's Service of Light candle ceremony were organ recipient Sinead Lowndes, with her husband Stuart and daughter Page, aged 5, on Saturday, October 14, in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Photo: Conor McCabe Photography.

Holy Land cardinal offers himself in exchange for hostages

Jason Osborne

In a desperate bid for peace, the head of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land has offered himself in exchange for Israeli children held in Gaza by the Hamas terrorist movement.

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who was made a cardinal by Pope Francis just last month, made the offer in a bid to bring the current conflict to an end before more lives are lost.

Some 1,400 Israelis were killed in the combined Hamas rocket and infiltration attack, while an estimated 2,500 Palestinians in Gaza have died in Israeli bomb attacks in response.

He insisted: "If I am ready for an exchange? Anything, if this can lead to freedom and bring those children back home, no problem."

"On my part, absolute willingness," he said.

The cardinal said that the Vatican was available at any time to act as a mediator.

He also expressed the fear that an Israeli ground offensive could intensify a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

SAINTLY STEWARDSHIP

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'Totally wrong' tax on religious orders could seriously impact way of life

» **Continued from Page 1** not in scope for the RZLT maps, lands used for residential purposes are in scope for the maps."

While the tax has been deferred for one year by Minister for Finance Michael McGrath, unless orders are able to get their zoning overturned or exempted, they will face a substantial bill.

The Secretary General of the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious Ireland (AMRI) has described the imposition of the tax as being of "great concern".

Ger Gallagher, AMRI's

interim Secretary General, said it is particularly worrying for enclosed contemplatives in urban areas.

"[I]t could seriously impact on their way of life, and impose a financial burden," said Mr Gallagher, whose association represents almost 100 missionary and religious orders based in Ireland.

The convents, monasteries and grounds of a number of religious orders have been included in the maps, with sources telling this paper that orders have engaged professional assistance to address the issue.

Our pilgrimage took on a new intensity amidst war

Thankfully all 52 of our Holy Land pilgrims are safe and well after the unprecedented situation of finding ourselves in Israel when war broke out with the militant faction Hamas.

The group of pilgrims arrived back in Dublin Airport on Thursday evening on a direct El Al flight from Tel Aviv, but the flight was substantially overbooked as many people wanted to get out – to go somewhere, anywhere. I was left without a seat on the flight, and as I waved the pilgrims through the security screen at Ben Gurion Airport, I will admit to more than a little trepidation considering how I would get home to Dublin.

We were in Bethany on the outskirts of Jerusalem when news of the Hamas attack broke out. We quickly returned across the border to the West Bank city of Bethlehem where we had been based for the early days of our pilgrimage. There was a sense of unease in the air as details of the audacity and ferocity of the attack became clearer. When the dust settled, it would go down in history as one of the worst incidents in the 75-year history of the Jewish state. One would have to go back to conflicts like the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur war to see such loss of life.

Nazareth

Our pilgrimage had been due to move north the following day – to Nazareth, the childhood town of Jesus. And so we did, with the gentle guiding hand of our spiritual director Fr Conor McDonough OP.

Fr Conor spoke for all of us when he said that the pilgrimage intensified as a result of the conflict that was going on around us.

Safety, of course, was our top priority and this required some creativity

and changes to our itinerary to ensure that pilgrims would be kept far away from where the fighting was taking place some 200 kilometres south of us.

“Most of this anxiety was reserved for their loved ones at home who were worrying about them and for the people of the Holy Land whose lives had changed in an instant”

All the time praying for peace, we tried to keep things as normal as possible and so the group were pleased to watch the Ireland vs Scotland rugby match on Saturday night.

Sunday morning brought us to Mount Tabor as our prayers for peace took on a reality that none of us could have imagined just a couple of days earlier.

Pilgrims were, understandably, anxious – but what was touching for me was that most of this anxiety was reserved for their loved ones at home who were worrying about them and for the people of the Holy Land whose lives had changed in an instant and who were now facing a war in which many more lives would be lost.

As a result of the conflict around us, I was also hugely humbled by the unity of purpose: the group very quickly became one, even though we were all from very different parts of the country and were joined by a pilgrim from

Editor's Comment

Michael Kelly



the United States and one from Germany. There was a strong determination that we would keep the group together.

Some people, of course, wanted to leave early. This proved impossible due to the number of flights being cancelled, and the rush there was for seats on the flights that were still running. It soon became clear, the best option for the group was to sit tight taking all the precautions we could and wait for the 51 seats that were confirmed on a flight on Thursday afternoon.

Sirens

Our hairiest moment came on the Wednesday night as we prepared to pack our suitcases. Sirens began sounding all across Nazareth where we were then based. This really was unprecedented. People in the south of Israel have become depressingly used to hearing sirens from time-to-time, but this has not been a way of life in the north in cities like Nazareth.

With my colleague Jason Osborne, we quickly shepherded pilgrims to the safe rooms in the hotel as people prayed the rosary. Quickly, we could breathe a sigh of relief – the sirens had been a false alarm. But they had certainly shaken people, and at this stage people were ready to go home.

There were smiles all-round the following morning as I distributed boarding passes for the

flight home, and we prayed on the bus as we made our way from Nazareth to the airport.

“When will pilgrims return to the Holy Land? It's a question that no-one knows the answer to”

With help from officials at the Embassy of Ireland in Tel Aviv, the pilgrims were quickly through the airport and the long queues and could relax at the gate with the flight leaving just an hour late.

I waved the plane off, and was relieved that everyone was leaving safely...everyone except me. No fear, in the meantime the Irish Embassy had been moving heaven and earth to help me and I was soon safe in the knowledge that I had a seat with the Royal Netherlands Air Force on an evacuation flight late that night. It was to Eindhoven rather than to Dublin, but getting back to Ireland was the easy part.

When will pilgrims return to the Holy Land? It's a question that no-one knows the answer to. We hope that we will soon be able to return as pilgrims of peace, but now our thoughts and prayers can be only for peace and for the people who share that Holy Land.

Love is stronger than hate: may peace be God's gift to the land he chose as his own.

“We hope that we will soon be able to return as pilgrims of peace, but now our thoughts and prayers can be only for peace and for the people who share that Holy Land”

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Irish Jews are ‘assured’ of Garda protection following safety concerns

Chai Brady

Ireland’s Jewish community have engaged Irish politicians and An Garda due to safety concerns following a “ramp up in rhetoric” in the country regarding Israel’s response to a terrorist attack on October 7.

Militant group Hamas which controls Gaza – currently under Israeli siege – killed more than 1,400 people in the unprecedented attack. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) stated 199

people were taken to Gaza as hostages. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed in Gaza following Israel’s declaration of war and human rights groups have called for humanitarian aid to be allowed into the area.

Chairperson of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland, Maurice Cohen, told *The Irish Catholic* he is “always cautious about the safety of Jewish people, but I have had assurances from the top politicians in the Dáil plus gardaí that we will

be protected... they are aware of our concerns for safety”.

Mr Cohen said the Jewish community “are very concerned about the ramping up of the rhetoric in both public and media discourse”.

He continued: “Most of the time it’s from people who really don’t understand the complexity of the historical and current situation. At this moment in time what everyone should remember is the absolute terror Hamas have wreaked on ordi-

nary citizens on October 7 and there’s nothing else to be said, anything else is whitewashing that... one has to go back to Hamas’s charter, they want to kill all Jews and basically wipe Israel off the map, and west-

ern civilisation should have no truck with this.”

The Jewish community are “traumatised” after the attack, he said, which saw atrocities committed against innocent civilians.

“This is the largest pogrom since the Holocaust,” Mr Cohen said. “It does rank as equal with some of the dreadful pogroms and atrocities that have been perpetrated against people just because they are Jews.”

Irish pilgrims praise God after safe return from the Holy Land

Jason Osborne

A group of 52 Irish pilgrims caught in the Holy Land as war broke out have returned safely to Ireland, with the group’s spiritual director saying that “God’s supporting presence” was very much felt by the pilgrims during their time there.

At least 1,400 people were killed and another 3,400 injured in Israel after the militant group

Hamas launched an incursion October 7 as the pilgrims were staying in Bethlehem in the West Bank.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the group’s spiritual director, Fr Conor McDonough OP said that “as a priest, it was a great blessing to see God’s grace in action as our pilgrims faced up to the challenges that emerged in a spirit of love and prayer”.

“We were given great support by [Editor of *The Irish*

Catholic] Michael Kelly, by Marian Pilgrimages, and by the Irish Embassy in Tel Aviv, but even more importantly we felt God’s supporting presence with us.”

The group, led by Marian Pilgrimages and *The Irish Catholic*, left Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv and landed safely in Dublin, October 12, with Mr Kelly leaving the Holy Land via a Dutch air force flight later that same night.

A pilgrimage to remember



Pictured are the pilgrims who travelled with *The Irish Catholic* and Marian Pilgrimages to the Holy Land standing outside the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, built over the site of Mary’s Well in Nazareth. Photo: Patrick Grant

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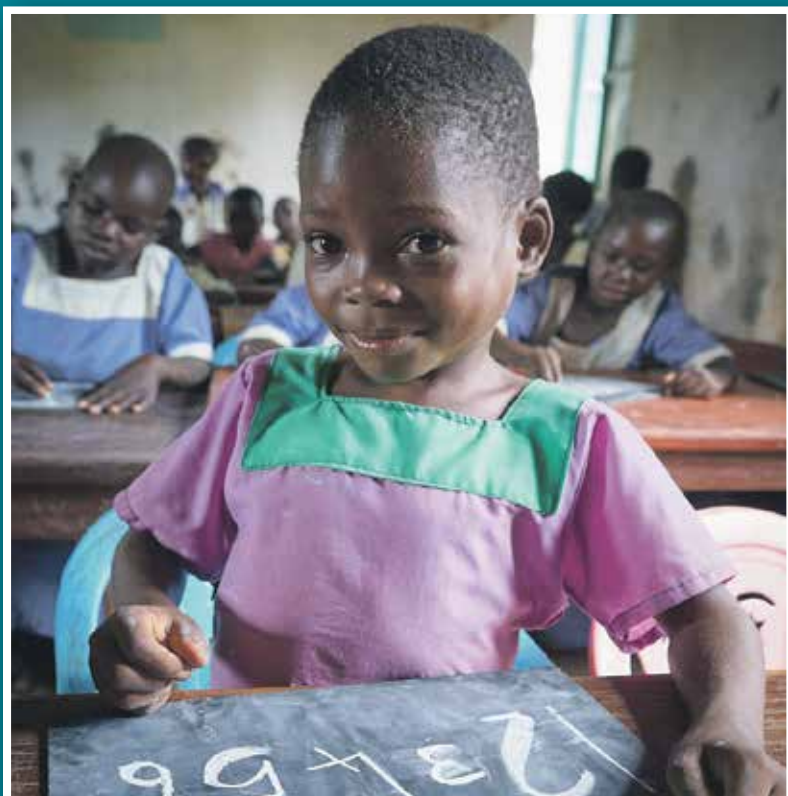


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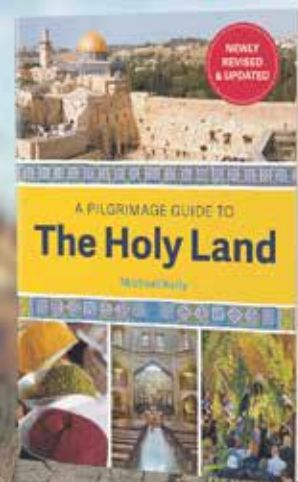
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Tánaiste's Old Testament remark 'lazy and clichéd' say Biblical scholars

Ruadhán Jones

Biblical scholars have criticised as "lazy" and "clichéd" a remark in the Dáil by An Tánaiste, in which he appeared to equate the Old Testament with violence and division.

Speaking about Israel's response to Hamas' terrorist attack, An Tánaiste Micheál Martin said that "We don't need an Old Testament approach to this, rather a New Testament approach".

"We need to move on the pathway to peace and reconciliation. It cannot be an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," Mr Martin continued.

A number of Irish Biblical scholars criticised An Tánaiste's remarks, both for suggesting the Old Testament is opposed to peace and reconciliation, and for suggesting a division between the Old and New

Testaments.

"It's lazy thinking," Fr Kieran O'Mahony OSA, Biblical scholar and founder of Tarsus Scripture school, told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It is a cliché, the Old Testament is an angry God and a vengeful religion. There is that in there, but that's not all that's in there," he continued.

For Fr O'Mahony, the issue calls to mind concerns regarding latent anti-Semitism among Christians, saying it's an old problem.

"It arose in the 2nd Century with a fella called Marcion, who wanted to reject the entire Old Testament," he explained.

"But they didn't, in the belief that it's the one God who's disclosing himself in an evolutionary way, you know, gradually in both testaments."

Sean Goan, a retired lecturer in Biblical Theology

and author on the Bible, warned that equating the Old Testament with violence and division is "a sort of Christian anti-Semitism".

"I'm sure Micheál Martin didn't intend it that way, but it's actually a condemnation of a religious worldview. And it's the religious worldview of Jesus, that's what they fail to understand."

Jesus was a Jew and preached from his Jewish heritage and Jewish scriptures, so to make a distinction between the Old and New Testaments "is to misunderstand the nature of the revelation that Jesus brought".

A former Professor of Scripture at Maynooth, Fr Maurice Hogan SSC, said that when dealing with Old Testament history, it's "more nuanced" and "not as straightforward" as we think.

"You're dealing with an

interpreted history, it's not like history as we know it today," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fr Hogan explained that the Old Testament was written to help people in the present to cope with whatever difficulties they had and so they went back to the past for help.

"For example, in the Exodus, Pharaoh there is painted almost as a demon, but that's not the purpose that Exodus was written for – it was to show that God was victorious over the powers of evil. That was represented in the text as Pharaoh," said Fr Hogan.

The Old Testament is more nuanced than history as we know it today, he continued: "Whereas history today is written to tell you the facts, Old Testament history is written to tell you not only the facts, but the meaning of the facts."

Irish priest maintains prayerful presence in Holy Land amid war

Jason Osborne

An Irish priest based at Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in the Holy Land has said that he's staying put to look after those under his care and provide a prayerful window into the Middle East for those living abroad.

Vice director at the Magdala tourist centre in the north of the country, Co. Clare native Fr Eamon Kelly LC said that the vast majority of their volunteer workers were sent home while others were placed on paid leave as the flow of pilgrims came to a stop.

"This was a whole shut-down process, not knowing what would happen," Fr Kelly told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper.

"We had one false alarm siren four or five days ago and so we all ran for the bomb shelters. Our building is a new building so we have state of the art facilities in terms of very well built shelters for such an occasion. The fact that there was a false alarm was also good because we got the trial run of what we'd need to do, God forbid, that should happen."

The "primary thing," Fr Kelly said, "is we need to take care of the people that are under our care".

However, he also sees his location as an opportunity to give a "different impression from the Middle East".

"There's a great value because of the livestreams I'm able to do," Fr Kelly said.

"Those are little things that go a long way to give a different impression from the Middle East. It helps to get people into praying."

Norway Catholics welcome Nobel Prize for writer-convert

Staff reporter

Church leaders in Norway have welcomed the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Jon Fosse, a Catholic convert, predicting the honour could raise Catholicism's profile in the traditionally Protestant country.

"Fosse gives voice, with elegance and beauty, to the mystery of faith... I think our

country is blessed to have a poet of his stature," said Bishop Erik Varden of Trondheim.

"A Catholic writer is someone who assimilated the grace of belonging to the Church in such a way that it's perfectly innate and natural to their self-expression. In that sense, Fosse is very much a Catholic writer." The novelist and playwright will receive the 2023 prize in Stockholm

December 10.

Born in 1959 at Haugesund on Norway's west coast, Fosse has published over 30 novels, as well as poetry collections, essays, children's books and translations. His theater works, performed worldwide, have made him Norway's most performed playwright since Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906).

Mr Fosse was received into the Catholic Church at St. Dominic's Monastery, Oslo, in

2012. His multivolume work, *Septology*, centering on a Catholic convert-painter, was shortlisted for the 2022 International Booker Prize and National Books Critics Award. In a November 2022 interview with *The New Yorker*, Fosse described his style as "slow prose" and "mystical realism", adding that he had turned to religious faith while struggling with alcoholism and other problems.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Humanist ceremonies damage abbey graves in Co. Clare

Unauthorised humanist weddings at a 13th Century abbey in Co. Clare are damaging grave slabs and upsetting local families, a Government minister have said.

Junior Minister Patrick O'Donovan said that "as a last resort", the Office of Public Works (OPW) have erected signage at Corcomroe Abbey advising visitors that such events are prohibited.

Corcomroe Abbey is a former Cistercian monastery located near Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare.

Minister O'Donovan said the Abbey is being regularly advertised by wedding celebrants as a location for humanist or civil ceremonies.

The graveyard is active and "regularly visited by family members who have been upset by finding litter, broken glass" and other detritus left behind, he said in the Dáil.

Bishop Cullinan to open Long Tower novena with vocations theme

The annual solemn novena in honour of Our Lady of Perpetual Help takes place in St Columba's, Long Tower, Derry for the nine Sundays before Christmas beginning Sunday, October 22, at 6pm.

This year's theme is the 'Year of Vocations to Diocesan Priesthood'.

Each night will comprise of the rosary, a talk given by various speakers, Novena prayer and petitions, Eucharistic healing service and Benediction.

Guest speaker on the opening night will be Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan, chair of the Irish bishops' council for the Year of Diocesan Priesthood.

Other guest speakers include Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly, Fr John Joe Duffy and Dana Rosemary Scallan.

Peter McVerry Trust appoints interim CEO amid finance probe

The Peter McVerry Trust has appointed former South Dublin County Council chief executive Danny McLoughlin as its interim CEO following the resignation of the charity's former CEO, Francis Doherty.

Mr Doherty resigned on October 11 after just four months in charge. His resignation came amid the backdrop of a probe into governance and finance-related matters at the Irish housing charity.

Both the Charities Regulator and the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA) are currently investigating financial and governance issues at the trust.

In an October 13 statement, the Peter McVerry Trust said that Mr McLoughlin had been appointed "to provide management services to Peter McVerry Trust, to include the functions of the CEO on an interim basis".

'Grain for eternal life...'



Patrick and Grace Reilly and their children are pictured after the Harvest Mass of Thanksgiving at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan.

No one would publish this famous author's Catholic book – so he did so himself...

Piers Paul Read is one of Britain's most distinguished novelists and writers – author of such best-sellers as *Alive* (the story of the Andes survivors), *The Templars*, and 17 novels in all, including *A Married Man*, *Monk Dawson*, and *The Free Frenchman* – the last being a riveting account of a French family during the Second World War.

With his successful track record, one might imagine that Piers would find it easy to obtain a publisher for his most recent endeavour – *A History of the Catholic Church*. But his proposal for this book was rejected by London publishers who were approached. The subject was just too unfashionable – especially coming from a Catholic author like PPR. “As the theologian Edward Norman has observed, in today's secular society Christianity, in particular Catholicism, is considered a bad thing.”

Action

And so, Piers Paul Read, now 82, without an established publisher, took direct action – and published his history of the Catholic Church himself. It's a paperback tome of 549 pages, divided into a variety of episodes, starting with the Jewish background to the life of Jesus, and ending with the words of Joseph Ratzinger (of whom Piers is an admirer.)

He was motivated to write this book by the experience of his eldest granddaughter, who, attending a prestigious secondary school in London, named after a Christian saint, “knew almost all there is to know about Virginia Woolf but next to nothing about



Mary Kenny

Jesus of Nazareth or the Catholic Church.”

“This is not a public-relations exercise: it's Church history, warts and all - and the failures are included”

I found it absorbing, informative and profound, and I liked the way a reader can dip into the wide range of subjects: from Helena, mother of Constantine to Bernard of Clairvaux, from the Albigensian heresy to Jansenism and Blaise Pascal; from *Rerum Novarum* to *Mit Brennender Sorge* – the powerful encyclical by Pius XI (aided by Eugenio Pacelli) that denounced the Nazi persecutions, and all racist discrimination.

Yet this is not a public-relations exercise: it's Church history, warts and all - and the failures are included. It reflects on thinkers from Augustine to De Maistre, Aquinas to Montaigne and Stendhal.

It is predominantly focused on Continental Europe – Ireland could have had more attention – and although he mentions many holy women, mothers and saints like Catherine of Siena, he could have given more specialised episodes to other women saints who had such an influence on faith. Women like St Angela de Merici, a great educational innovator, St Jane of Chantal – a widow who launched an order of nuns against the wishes of her teenage children – or St Rose of Lima and her significance to the missionary world. Although he does

Making a Fosse...



Jon Fosse

Notwithstanding the negative way that Catholicism may be portrayed by some of the intelligentsia or publishing world, there are those who still embrace the Faith.

One such is the Nor-

wegian writer Jon Fosse, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature for 2023. Jon Fosse is the most widely performed playwright in Europe and his novels have been described as “beautiful and religious”. His new

short novel *A Shining* is about encounters with the spiritual.

Jon Fosse is aged 64 and the father of three children. The Norwegian laureate is also a convert to Catholicism.

“As Pope Benedict had recognised, popes, emperors, kings and theologians may dominate a history of the Church, but its ‘main base is always those people who are humble believers, those who need love and give love”

“Today our hearts beat with fear. Who among us is going to die?...We go on this dangerous mission knowing that some of us will not return, but will ascend to our next position in a storm to heaven as Eliyahu the prophet did. We go there with devotion and dedication. We ask you to be our protection through your prayers. Protect us by going beyond yourselves through spirituality and good deeds.

“Pray for us. Pray that you will not see another mother bury her son. Pray that you will not see our women as widows raising our children in tears. Pray that we eliminate the terrorists who aim to destroy us, and that we do not harm innocent women and children. Say a chapter of Psalms...I am sure your prayer will make a difference. Remember we are in this together.”

(From an Israeli soldier's letter sent to me by a Jewish friend.)

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Priests trained abroad can 'invigorate' Faith in Ireland

Chai Brady

Charities that support missionary work across the world have said the increase in vocations to Irish missionary orders abroad is "encouraging", and it could help spread the Faith in Ireland.

The National Director of Missio Ireland, Fr Michael Kelly SPS, told *The Irish Catholic* while most Irish missionaries are elderly and

many have retired, "there's new fruit emerging".

He said that in his society, the Kiltigans, their superior general is from Nigeria and there are priests from Zambia and Kenya on their council. Fr Kelly said there have been 11 ordinations overseas this year and "now they're thinking of sending some of those back to Ireland, so hopefully that will help to invigorate a sense of Faith and mission in

people's lives".

Fr Kelly said the Kiltigans are training a "new generation of priests to come to Ireland or to Europe", saying it is the missionary work Ireland did but in reverse.

Missio Ireland, which is the Pope's charity for overseas mission, support poorer seminaries abroad. Fr Kelly said that "we're actually preparing the next generations of priests that we may have

– but also the numbers might increase here as well".

Chair of the Misesan Cara Board of Directors, Kevin Carroll – who has been involved in overseas development for 40 years – said that while there is a large decrease in the number of Irish missionaries abroad there are many non-Irish people joining religious orders.

Mr Carroll said: "The encouraging thing about it is

there a lot of young non-Irish missionaries joining congregations. The Holy Rosary Sisters in Ireland currently have their first African Superior General. There's a transition taking place and there's a lot of very capable missionaries emerging, I've met them in my travels – young and highly enthusiastic, working in Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria. So that is the encouraging part, that transition is happening

at the moment... encouraging African, Asian, South American people into the congregations."

He added: "I think that's a very healthy thing because in reality the age cohort of the Irish missionaries is quite high. A lot of them are quite elderly now, they're not going to be there forever, so I would be encouraged by that."

[See pages 14-15](#)

Recruitment freeze must not lead to further pressure on HSE – chaplain

Staff Reporter

A recruitment freeze must not add further pressure to Ireland's health service, particularly in the context of a growing and aging population and large number of refugees entering Ireland, a hospital chaplain has warned.

This comes as the HSE introduced a recruitment freeze which includes junior doctors, clerical, agency and patient staff, healthcare assistants and home helps. The wide-ranging recruit-

ment embargo also includes administrators, HSE managers and more.

The Director of Pastoral Care at Tallaght University Hospital, Fr John Kelly, told *The Irish Catholic*: "There is a general shortage of staff in the healthcare profession, that is a known fact. The services have expanded and there isn't the number of staff required.

"Any freeze must not add to pressures on the workforce because people are already working in pressurised areas, when you bring together the

whole picture, the whole spectrum of the health service – it is under pressure."

There is an exemption for health and social care professionals, emergency services, GPs, nurses, midwives, dentists and orthodontists for public service schools and hospital consultants in the HSE freeze.

However, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation said that while nurses are exempt, they will still be affected as "it will add to the pressure that our members who are working in over-

crowded and understaffed wards are already facing".

Fr Kelly said areas such as "nursing and medical need to be protected because there is pressures already", adding that the "number of people presenting themselves to the health service has increased, the population has increased, obviously its aging and there is 100,000 extra Ukrainians in the country and they bring particular needs to a health service that's under pressure already, so the pressure is mounting".

Famous Irish manuscript returns from France for display

Jason Osborne

A rare 15th Century Irish manuscript found in France has recently returned to Ireland and gone on public display.

The 'Rennes Manuscript' is believed to have been brought to France by either a nobleman or an Irish army officer during the exodus of the 'Wild Geese' in the late 17th or early 18th Century.

The 200-page vellum manuscript is on public display in the Glucksman Gallery in University College Cork, having been secured on loan from the city library in Rennes, Brittany.

Believed to have been compiled during the second half of the 15th Century, the Rennes manuscript is lavishly decorated and contains a wide range of materials, including religious texts and place lore.

Notes contained in the text indicate that the manuscript remained in Ireland until at least the 1640s.

Patroness of Brazil in Dublin...



Members of the Brazilian Catholic community, based out of St Mary of the Angels Capuchin friary in Dublin, celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Aparecida, declared by Pope Pius XI to be the Patroness of Brazil, with a procession through Ireland's capital on Sunday, October 15.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Awareness campaign for abuse survivors continues

The North of Ireland's Executive Office has launched the next phase of the awareness campaign for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse.

This phase of the campaign will focus on using digital media and outdoor advertising to increase awareness of the support, services and compensation available for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse.

It will build on the newspaper advertising, posters and social media videos issued in March and the leaflets distributed to every household in Northern Ireland in May.

Patrick Gallagher, Director of Victims and Survivors, the Executive Office said since its foundation the redress board has received more than 4,035 applications and made award determinations totalling some £77 million (€89 million).

Exclusion zones set up in NI

Exclusion zones have been introduced at eight health service locations performing abortions across the North, the Department of Health announced.

The zones, which prohibit pro-life witness and prayer, are now in operation at premises run by five health and social care trusts.

These are: Craigavon Area Hospital, 100m; Daisy Hill Hospital, 130m; College Street, 130m; Bradbury Wellbeing and Treatment Centre, 150m; Causeway Hospital, 100m; Altnagelvin Hospital, 100m; Lagan Valley Hospital, 100m; Ulster Hospital, 100m.

Pro-life organisations in the North have protested against the imposition the draconian restrictions of their freedom of expression and religion.



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Govt giving in to ‘ideological colonisation’ around abortion pro-life conference hears

Ruadhán Jones

The Government is giving in to the “ideological colonisation” of developing countries by supporting radical pro-abortion groups such as Planned Parenthood, the Pro Life Campaign’s national conference heard.

Hundreds of people attended the conference in the RDS, Dublin, on Saturday, October 14.

Keynote speaker Obianuju Ekeocha, founder of Culture of Life Africa, warned that Western countries make their support for developing nations conditional on permitting abortion.

She highlighted Ireland’s donation of €300,000 to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, saying it is “vitaly

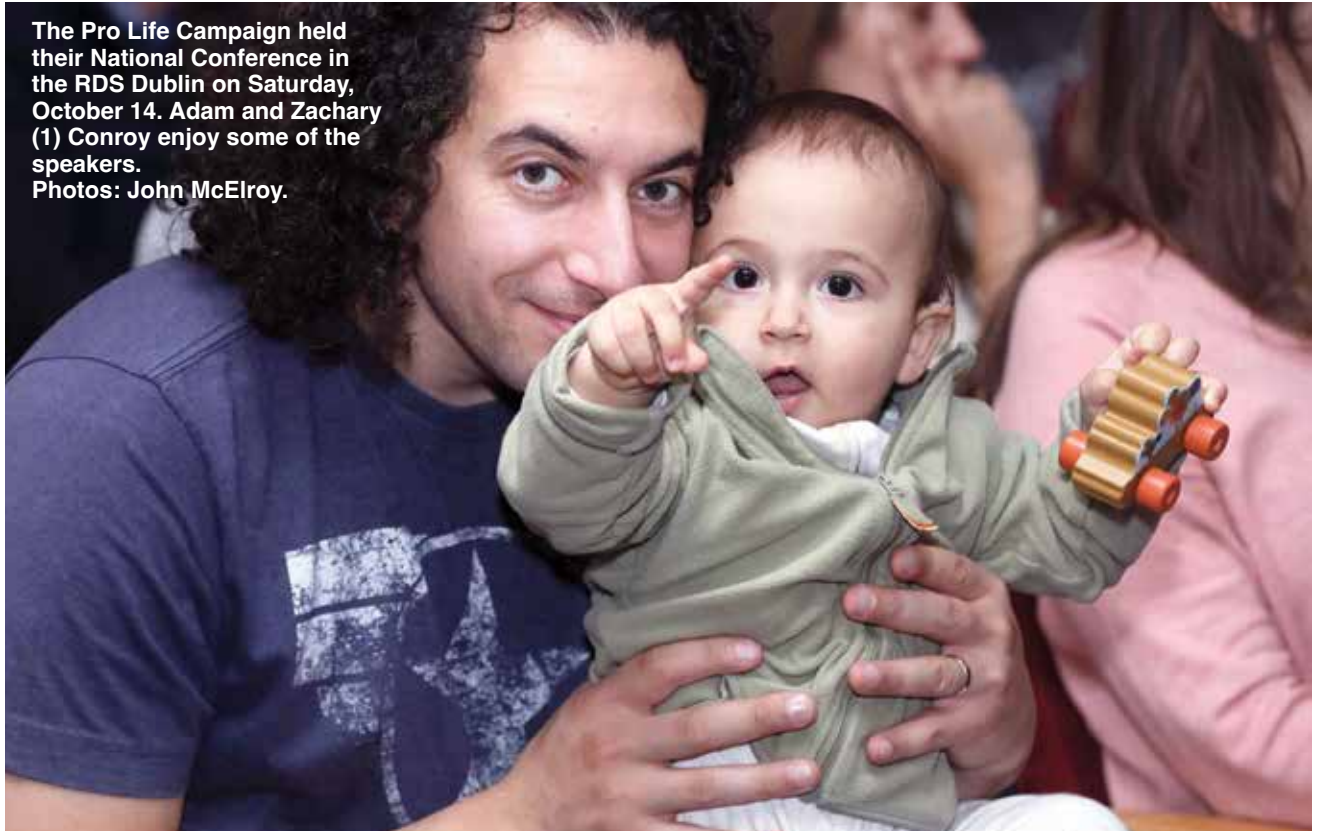
important” that the public across the West call for the end to such “ideological colonisation”.

Another speaker, GP Dr Andrew O’Regan, shared the story of his late infant son Liam O’Regan who was diagnosed with a life-limiting condition.

“The politicians who are making the laws, many of them hear this term ‘fatal foetal abnormality’ and they don’t understand that this boy was not a fatal foetal abnormality, he was Liam O’Regan and he was our son,” said Dr O’Regan.

The event was also addressed by Jordan Brittain of Students For Life of America, Luke Silke, Galway based local election candidate for Aontú and Melissa Byrne of Students For Life Ireland.

The Pro Life Campaign held their National Conference in the RDS Dublin on Saturday, October 14. Adam and Zachary (1) Conroy enjoy some of the speakers.
Photos: John McElroy.



Maria Conroy Byrne, Elsie Conroy, Lottie Conroy, Eli Conroy, Ezra Conroy and David Conroy at the conference on Saturday.



Sarah Dowling with her son Theo (3) and Reidin Beatty are pictured at the PLC conference.



Melissa Byrne, keynote speaker Obianuju Ekeocha, Sinead Forrest, Sylvia Nwokolo and Liam Murphy are pictured outside the RDS.



Ria Noonan listens to a speaker at the conference.



Faith Haden and Katie Fenton of Students for Life attend the conference on Saturday.



Declan, Marie, Peter and Sam Lillis.



Karl and Sadhbh (2) Melady enjoy the pro-life conference in the RDS.



Trish Rogers (right) receives a tribute to her sister, the late Kathleen Rogers, from Ellis Mulroy of the Pro Life Campaign for her sister's contribution to the pro-life cause.



Verity Patrick and Francina Competente check out the conference stands.

THE SYNODAL TIMES



OCTOBER 2023 ISSUE

For the October issue of The Synodal Times, we ask a wide range of Catholics what they want to see from the upcoming Synod of Bishops meeting. We also break down just exactly who will be in attendance at this all-important event in Rome.

The issue will also feature the big interview with Dr Myriam Wijlens on how 'Synodality also means accountability'. And finally, Professor Serena Noceti will enlighten readers on the topic of laypeople becoming members of a synodal Church.



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Out&About

All creatures great and small



MAYO: All creatures great and small were welcomed to Knock International Marian and Eucharistic Shrine on Saturday, October 7, for a blessing of pets ceremony. Photo: Janapix



WESTMEATH: Anne Hogan, Meedin, is pictured enjoying her 100th birthday celebrations with Fr William Coleman, Rochfortbridge.



CLARE: Fr Joy Njarakattuvoly of Ennis is joined by Fr Rexon Chullickal of Nenagh as Fr Joy celebrates his 60th birthday.



OFFALY: A very special celebration brought the Clara community out in droves to honour the very popular Sr Immaculata Barrett, who has been serving the community for the past 70 years. Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan celebrated Mass in Sr Immaculata's honour in St Brigid's Church, Clara.



LOURDES: Dublin diocese pilgrim and Benemerenti medal recipient Sadie O'Connell is pictured with Archbishop Dermot Farrell during the diocese's pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



ARMAGH: Fr Barry Matthews joins the Mount St Catherine's PS community, including chaplain Fr Emmanuel Fasakin, for the opening of the Den and the Nest, two new specialist classes for the school.



DUBLIN: Members of the Brazilian community from Naas join Fr Severino OFM Cap. during the novena to Our Lady of Aparecida celebrated in the Capuchin Friary, Church Street.



MAYO: Archbishop of Tuam Francis Duffy KC*HS was invested into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem - Lieutenancy of Ireland by Archbishop emeritus Michael Neary on Saturday October, October 7, in St Mary of the Rosary Church Cong. He is pictured after his investment with Peter Durnin (Drogheda) and Archbishop Emeritus Neary.



TIPPERARY: Parishioners and friends of the late Paddy Noonan admire a chalice commissioned in St Anthony's shrine in Padua in Italy to honour Mr Noonan's memory. The funeral for the former parish clerk of Holy Family Church in Ardfinnan took place on Saturday, October 7.



CAVAN: Pictured are Rita Fleming, Kathleen McArdle, Barbara Alwell and Noreen Rooney of Kingscourt Apostolic Society making a presentation to Fr Octavius Flomo in support of the education of young children in his parish school in Liberia.

ARMAGH

Apostolic Workers to hold their annual remembrance Mass on Saturday, October 21 at 6.30pm in Armagh Cathedral.

CAVAN

Cavan Town Mens Shed meet at rear of Cana House, Farnham St Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10am-1pm. New members always welcome.

CORK

A Medjugorje prayer meeting takes place every Wednesday at 8pm in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Third Order chapel, Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay.

DOWN

Lectio Divina in Newry Cathedral takes place in the Parish Centre on Thursday after 10:30am Mass, usually getting underway by 11:15am.

DUBLIN

St John Henry Newman conference takes place Wednesday, October 25 at Newman House MoLI, 86 St Stephen's Green, on 'The Academic and Pastoral Vision of the Catholic University' from 5.30pm and 'Frustration and Failure' in Newman University Church on Thursday, October 26, from 5.30pm. Guest speaker Dr Paul Shrimpton.

FERMANAGH

A novena Mass to St Peregrine, patron of those who have cancer, is celebrated every Tuesday at 7pm in Holy Cross Church in Lisnaskea. It is also live streamed at Churchservices.tv/lisnaskea.

GALWAY

October rosary procession takes place in Galway Cathedral at 8pm each Sunday evening during October.

KERRY

Youth 2000 Prayer Group (18-35) meets on Thursdays at 8pm in St John's Church side chapel, Tralee.

KILKENNY

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

LEITRIM

Daily rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

LOUTH

'Does God exist? Are you happy?' Talks on faith for young and adults by the Neocatechumenal Way take place in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Drogheda; Mondays and Thursdays at 7:30pm, come and listen!

MAYO

The next Latin Mass will take place at 6pm in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Knock Shrine, on Sunday November 12.

MEATH

Fr John Byrne to continue his introduction to the Bible on Mondays at 12 noon via the Kells webcam, accessible on www.kellsparish.ie. This year he will introduce the St. John's Gospel and each session will last 25 minutes. For queries, you may contact Fr John on email: jplowebyrne@gmail.com

MONAGHAN

During the month of October the rosary will be recited at Our Lady's Shrine, Kednaminsha, Inniskeen, each Sunday at 8pm. The rosaries will be offered to ask Our Lady to increase vocations to the diocesan priesthood and to ask God's blessings on those serving as priests and religious.

OFFALY

Tullamore parish host Youth 2000 prayer meeting on Thursdays, beginning with Holy Hour at 7pm and a happy hour at 8pm.

ROSCOMMON

Eucharistic adoration takes place the first Friday of each month in Drumboylan Church (Ardcarne Parish) from 9am-10pm.

TIPPERARY

Girls get-together (ages 8-12), Saturday, October 21, from 12-5.30pm in the parochial house, Pearse Street, Cahir, organised by the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother. Contact: hmactivitiesireland@gmail.com

WATERFORD

The Cistercian Community, St Mary's Abbey, Glencairn invite single women, aged 19-40, to their upcoming monastic vocations weekend on October 27-29. Contact Sr Sarah at vocations@glencairnabbey.org to register.

WESTMEATH

Cana couples event takes place Saturday 4 November at 5pm in the Ceili community House, Harbour Road, Kilbeggan, N91NY28. A chance to meet other couples for discussion and food. Contact: canaireland@gmail.com

The fragile position of the Jewish people in the world



The recent terror attacks in Israel have highlighted ongoing anti-Semitism around the world, writes **David Quinn**

Ireland was one of the few parts of Europe not occupied by the Germans during World War II or



that came under the rule of a puppet government, like in Vichy France. This meant we never had to witness large numbers of Jews being taken from their homes and herded like sheep on to trains, never to be seen again. Nor have we any historical memory of anti-Semitism as other parts of Europe. The Germans, for obvious reasons, have a special historical sensitivity, but so do the French, because a lot of French were guilty of anti-Semitism and collaborated with the Germans in rounding up Jews.

I think this may mean that we are not as sensitive to anti-Semitism as other parts of Europe. The Germans, for obvious reasons, have a special historical sensitivity, but so do the French, because a lot of French were guilty of anti-Semitism and collaborated with the Germans in rounding up Jews.

There was anti-Semitism in Ireland to be sure. For example, in 1904, the tiny Jewish community of Limerick was the target of anti-Semitic diatribes from a priest named Fr John Creagh, which, in particular, singled out the 'trading practices' of the Jews, a classic anti-Semitic theme.

In the aftermath of his sermons, members of the local Jewish community found themselves being harassed, spat at and jeered, and the RIC had to intervene. But the worst effect of the sermons was the boycott of local Jewish businesses which caused many of the already small community to quit the city. There were people in Ireland who were influenced by the anti-Semitic atmosphere that prevailed in much of Europe and helped to set the scene for the Holocaust. It is hard to know how we would have behaved if we had a large Jewish community here and if we had fallen under Nazi rule.

Semitic theme.

But without doubt, a lot of Christians were guilty of anti-Semitism, often of the worst kind. Jews were routinely condemned as 'Christ-killers' and Christian mobs often turned violently on Jewish communities in their midst, frequently killing them and driving them out. These are the pogroms, so well-known to Jewish people.

Again and again, attention would turn to Jewish lending practices and to this day, anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists love to talk about Jewish 'control' of international finance, with the Rothschild family singled out for special mention.

The Jews would always be blamed for drawing these attacks on themselves. It was their own fault if people turned on them, was the line.

Several centuries before that, they had been carried off in the so-called 'Babylonian Captivity'. Before that, they were slaves in Egypt. Following the failing uprising of 70AD and the mass slaughter of Jews carried out by the Romans, most of those who survived scattered to other parts of the world, especially Europe and the Middle East. This is known as the 'diaspora'.

There were already Jewish communities waiting for them. This is partly how early Christianity spread, by seeking conversions in existing Jewish communities in the Roman Empire. These communities grew in size, but as they grew, they also became targets, and they were always in a minority wherever they were. They had no homeland to return to, but they yearned for one, hence the Jewish phrase, "Next year in Jerusalem".

In parts of the Muslim world, they were sometimes more tolerated than in the Christian world. The Habsburg Empire often tried to protect them from the worst excesses of anti-Semitism, as did the United States, although anti-Semitism did exist in both places.

Then we had the absolute calamity of World War II and the Holocaust. Six million Jews had been killed. Their vulnerability had been exposed in the most brutal possible way, in the worst crime in all of history.

Where could they go? The world community finally agreed to the establishment of a Jewish State back in their ancestral home in what we now call Israel. The problem, of course, is that Palestinians also lived there. The UN decided there should be two-states in the formerly unified Palestine, one for the Jews and one for the Palestinians, and in 1948, Israel came into being. But Arab armies invaded hoping to kill Israel at birth. Israel successfully defended itself and there followed ethnic cleansing on both sides.

Then, in 1967, Israel preemptively attacked Egypt, Syrian and Jordan when they saw their armies preparing another invasion and in doing so took over the Golan Heights in Syria, the West Bank and the Sinai Desert, including the Gaza Strip.

Following a peace agreement with Egypt, the Sinai peninsula was handed back. The West Bank has semi-autonomy. The Israelis quit the Gaza Strip altogether in

2005, but the terrorist organisation, Hamas, took it over in 2007. A two-state solution remains out of reach with tragic effects for both sides. Then, earlier this month, Hamas fighters broke into Israel and slaughtered 1,400 people, men, women, children, infants, almost all of them Jews. Hamas is an anti-Semitic organisation of a particularly virulent kind, on a par with ISIS or the Nazis and is dedicated to the destruction of Israel.

This was not civilians killed in fighting between two armies. It was a deliberate massacre, the worst killing of Jews since World War II. Amazingly, no Israeli flags appeared here on public buildings in sympathy, whereas they appeared in most of the rest of Europe. This gets back to our basic lack of historical memory of widespread anti-Semitism and a lack of appreciation for the continued vulnerability of Jewish people, post-Holocaust.

In many parts of Europe, anti-Semitism is on the rise again, driven, it has to be said, by growing Muslim populations which often contain anti-Semitic and Jihadist elements. But it is also being driven, usually indirectly, by mostly far-left groups who judge Israel to be part of the 'imperialist' West that is subjugating the Palestinians. This means they will often share platforms with organisations like Hamas, which lends a certain respectability to their anti-Semitism.

If you are a Jew living in a country like France, you see your synagogues having to be placed under armed guard, your schools under protection, and stepped-up security for Jewish MPs. How does this make you feel? And you probably fear that the problem will worsen over time.

In fact, you cannot believe that such measures are necessary less than 80 years after the end of World War II, and you see the Jewish homeland created after the Holocaust under severe pressure and your co-religionists being slaughtered again.

The fact is, that the position of Jews in the world is still vulnerable and fragile. In the Middle East, there should be a two-state solution, but even if there is, the threat to Jewish people will almost certainly remain. We Irish should be more sensitive to that.

Where to go?

What could they do now? Where could they go? The world community finally agreed to the establishment of a Jewish State back in their ancestral home in what we now call Israel.

The problem, of course, is that Palestinians also lived there. The UN decided there should be two-states in the formerly unified Palestine, one for the Jews and one for the Palestinians, and in 1948, Israel came into being. But Arab armies invaded hoping to kill Israel at birth. Israel successfully defended itself and there followed ethnic cleansing on both sides.

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A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, hugging each other. The girl is on the left, smiling broadly, and the boy is on the right, looking towards the camera. They are both wearing patterned clothing. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

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Irish youth encouraged to follow oft risky footsteps of missionaries



An Irish missionary speaks to **Chai Brady** about police brutality and oppression, and tackling gender-based violence in South Africa

The profound culture shock and oppression witnessed after landing in South Africa as a young idealistic sister in 1984, ready to help the vulnerable and needy, was enough to “tear your heart apart”, according to the new leader of the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption.

Having taught children for decades through apartheid and civil unrest, Sr Mary McAteer, who is still based in South Africa, says her Faith helped her through harsher times. Hailing from Antrim, she went to a school in Ballynahinch, Co. Down. It was there she first met the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption and driven by a calling to help the less fortunate in an unequal world, she joined the congregation and found herself in a South Africa embroiled in conflict.

Sr McAteer began teaching in a high school started by the diocese in the township of Atteridgeville to the west of Pretoria. The school taught black children and mainly consisted of staff who were black, with Sr McAteer and two other sisters being the only white teachers.

“The only other white people you would see in the township were a couple of doctors who used to be in the hospital, and then – as it was a desperate place – in the army every now and again. They came in and out,” Sr McAteer recalls.

Supported

The sister said she was well supported by the local bishop who visited her in the school because the diocese was concerned, as it was “nearly in a warzone”. During a visit, Sr



Sr Mary McAteer (Left) of the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption has been a missionary in South Africa for more than 30 years. Among the projects she works with is the Cathca Inkanyezi project, that partners with teams of Community Advocates who tackle gender-based violence (GBV) in poor, informal settlements outside Johannesburg. Photo: Lizette Cressey

McAteer said: “After he spoke, the bishop called me over and said, ‘I was worried about you’ – He knew I was only out from Ireland – and then he said, ‘But then they told me you’re from Belfast and I said, sure she’ll feel at home’. I didn’t grow up in Belfast, but at least I did know the desperation of oppression – but not the way it was here.”

“You people know nothing that come from the outside, Mandela will never be released, he will die in jail, you people don’t understand”

Sr McAteer described the situation as “terrible”, recalling giving “naïve” advice to a young boy she taught. She said: “I remember at one time with one of the boys, his arm was all cut, and I said: ‘Did you fall?’ He said, ‘No we were talking and the army came along so we ran and I fell.’”

“I said in all innocence, ‘Maybe when you run they

think you’re doing something wrong and then they chase you, maybe if you just stood there they wouldn’t.”

She continued: “So the next night at 12 on the dot there’s a phone call, ‘Sister, you told me not to run, I didn’t run and now I’m in jail can you come and get me?’ It was a desperate, desperate time, you couldn’t imagine that it would end even.”

Mandela

She remembers speaking to members of the black community about Nelson Mandela, who was still in jail at the time (he was released in 1990), and how there was a feeling of hopelessness against the brutal South African apartheid regime. “I remember saying to some of them, ‘You know one day Mandela will be released’, I was told ‘You people know nothing that come from the outside, Mandela will never be released, he will die in jail, you people don’t understand’. It was desperate times altogether,” Sr McAteer reiterated.

After four years she moved to a rural area, far from electricity and running water. Sr McAteer recalls teaching people how to vote in the first all-race election in South Africa in 1994.

Many adults were illiterate and needed to be shown how to use a pen and to write an ‘X’.

“The risk of abuse for disabled young people is very high, they are more likely to be abused than anyone else”

She said: “On the day of the election, I will never, ever, ever forget it. It was a very isolated area so you never saw many people at the same time. They lived in traditional homes made of grass. But that morning there were queues to get in to vote. The older grannies were pushed in wheelbarrows. They were sitting there smiling, the young men pushing them, going to vote for the first time – it was unbelievable, even as I say it, the emotion and the wonder after all the violence that had happened, and all the oppression, that it could come to these people going to vote all around the country in peace.”

In 2016 Sr McAteer went to work at a small school for children with disabilities in Port Alfred, in the Eastern Cape.

The school provides a space where children can learn, play, socialise and learn simple skills training as they get older. It is one of very few such educational opportunities in the area for children with disabilities. This is one of the projects that received funding from Irish charity Mísean Cara, which supports missionaries working worldwide to empower those left furthest behind.

Encouragement

Another sister, Sr Elizabeth, established the school – the English name of which is ‘A Place of Encouragement’ – after seeing many children with disabilities being excluded from mainstream school and being forced to stay at home. When Sr McAteer arrived many of the children were turning 18 and “there was nothing else for them”.

“The risk of abuse for disabled young people is very high, they are more likely to be abused than anyone else,” the sister said. So she began, with the help of locals, to teach them gardening, knitting, sewing, cooking and more. Subsequently an Irish volunteer from Dublin, sent by Viatores Christi, trained workers to teach peo-

ple with disabilities and “really helped to raise the standards,” according to Sr McAteer, who admitted at that point she didn’t have specific training to teach those with disabilities. She added that the project is “going strong” and continues to provide more services.

“Cathca is running support services in several areas where there’s nothing, there’s just tin houses. They do a great job”

Among the projects the congregation is involved in – with the support of Mísean Cara and in partnership with the Catholic Healthcare Association of Southern Africa, known as Cathca – they help those suffering gender-based violence.

“There’s an awful lot of gender-based violence in South Africa across all economic strata,” said Sr McAteer. “I suppose among the very poor where there’s so much desperation, it’s even worse. Cathca is running support services in several areas where there’s



Community advocates with the Cathca Inkanyezi project connect survivors of domestic and gender-based violence with services such as counselling, legal aid, and self-empowerment to help them heal and safely resume their lives. Photo: Lizette Cressey

nothing, there's just tin houses. They do a great job.

"They identify an organisation who are already trying to do something, get them to identify five unemployed young people who have some umph in them, who would like to help, and then Cathca go and do a week's training with them about gender-based violence."

The training involves several factors, including how to raise awareness. Those involved also meet other key stakeholders, who may be representatives from the nearest clinic, the police, a women's shelter, someone from the Department of Social Development, a counsellor and others involved in the area.

The young people would then go to the local pub, schools, places where there are refugees or migrants and raise awareness. They also visit people's homes and hand out small cards which would have the name of the police officer, someone from the clinic, the shelter and so on.

Sr McAteer said the idea is that when they are at the home, if the woman in question "can't

speak freely – because maybe the man is near – that she is a victim of abuse, they just say goodbye, shake hands and put this card into their hand just so they have it".

She added that she visits the young CAs (Community Advocates) saying they "are full of idealism they think the world is good and marriages are good and then they come across these desperate stories and at that stage... they are half broken. They were weighed down by it."

Sr McAteer highlighted the importance of Misean Cara's support to keep the project up and running. Among other aspects, they pay the CAs which allows them to continue doing their work, helping women suffering gender-based violence.

Encouraging

The current Chair of the Misean Cara Board of Directors, Kevin Carroll – who has been involved in overseas development for 40 years – spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about the importance of Irish missionaries, who have and continue to make a huge positive dif-

ference in countries all over the world to this day.

Having lived in Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, India and Sudan, working with Irish Aid, Trócaire, Concern, Mr Carroll is no stranger to missionaries around the world.

He said: "They have a commitment that you may not get in other areas. NGOs do tremendous work as well, but where missionaries shine is that they are a witness, they have a presence when they move into wherever location it's going to be – and it's often places that are in the middle of nowhere. They learn the local language, they become a part of the community and when things get tough as they often do in war torn areas like South Sudan and even in Uganda, they stay."

He explained: "When I was in Uganda, parts of the country where quite unsafe, but the missionaries stayed, they didn't leave. That gives people, local communities, a huge sense of reassurance that they are cared for, that they are valued. That is

"It tears your heart apart, what you see does that, but at the same time you know you're making a difference in the lives of people, and it makes it all very worthwhile"

what attracted me, when I retired, to become involved with Misean Cara because I believe that not only just the presence but the quality of the work that they do in development is in many cases quite extraordinary and it's quite varied. They do the basic stuff – the really important basic stuff – the building blocks for development are education, healthcare, those kinds of things. But they also have done extraordinary work in the promotion of human rights often at great personal cost.

"There's a transition taking place and there's a lot of very capable missionaries emerging, I've met them in my travels – young and highly enthusiastic, working in Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria"

Mr Carroll gives Fr Gabriel Dolan SPS, a Kiltegan missionary, as an example of a person who went beyond the building blocks of development work in his tireless fight for human rights in Turkana, a very poor region of northern Kenya.

Fr Donal wrote a memoir called *Undaunted* which Mr Carroll recommends, saying if you want to know the impact of missionary work "read the last piece of each chapter".

Giving an example, Mr Carroll said: "He was getting legal aid for people to get registration of their land so they can stay where they live and not be evicted. The impact small initiatives like that can have on people's livelihood is quite

extraordinary. You are often targeted because you are challenging the system, challenging unjust structures."

Looking to the future of Irish missionaries, Mr Carroll guesses there are about 400-500 left around the world, when there used to be thousands.

He said: "The encouraging thing about it is there a lot of young non-Irish missionaries joining congregations. The Holy Rosary Sisters in Ireland currently have their first African Superior General. There's a transition taking place and there's a lot of very capable missionaries emerging, I've met them in my travels – young and highly enthusiastic, working in Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria. So that is the encouraging part, that transition is happening at the moment... encouraging African, Asian, South American people into the congregations.

"I think that's a very healthy thing because in reality the age cohort of the Irish missionaries is quite high. A lot of them are quite elderly now, they're not going to be there forever, so I would be encouraged by that."

Hopes

Sr McAteer – still a very active Irish missionary – asked about her hopes for South Africa, which continues to face a plethora of social issues including unemployment and crime, said she would like to see those who have nothing "get a fairer share of the world's goods" and that their right to dignity is accepted "and they are able to live in peace and harmony and develop their gifts".

"If your big concern every day is getting something to eat these other things get pushed aside. So if people had their basic rights,

it could be a very different place," she said.

Faith

"If it wasn't for my Faith I don't know where I would be, especially for those first four years," Sr McAteer said. "I suppose when you're younger, I was all idealistic in my 20s full of energy to change the world, and then met police brutality and oppression. There's a bit in the Bible where it talks about the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, and I remember, there's a big church there beside the school where I was in the first four years and I remember going in and saying 'And who are you, this God, who is here, and all of this... you know, a child would be playing in a garden and the next thing he's shot by a bullet that's meant for somebody else'."

Despite these challenges she insists that "Faith is what makes it all possible".

Regarding the work of Irish missionaries, Sr McAteer said that it is her conviction that what missionaries give is small in comparison to what they receive from the poorest of the poor and that young Irish people should consider a vocation to the missionary life.

"I would encourage this present generation of Irish youth to think about coming to help in an area that is developing and has not got all that Ireland has," she said, continuing "I would encourage the Irish youth to follow in the steps of those who have gone ahead of them and to live their lives to serve and make a difference. It tears your heart apart, what you see does that, but at the same time you know you're making a difference in the lives of people, and it makes it all very worthwhile."



Kevin Carroll (left) Chair of the Misean Cara Board of Directors, with Misean Cara CEO, John Moffett at the Misean Cara 2023 AGM in June 2023. Photo: Jennifer Barker Photography

Missionaries leading the way on reform of care for children with disabilities

During the summer of 2022, Misesan Cara CEO John Moffett travelled with staff to South Africa and Zambia to visit projects run by Irish missionaries demonstrating innovation in tackling gender-based violence, access to education for migrant children, protecting the rights of women and girls, and care for children with disabilities.

"Seeing the incredible work and impact of missionaries in person is very inspiring and can spark a lot of new ideas," remarks Mr Moffett. "A real lightbulb moment for us on that trip was the excellence of the support to children with disabilities that we witnessed, compassionate and thoughtful approaches

"Exposure to projects like this eventually led to an idea to promote these approaches within the wider care reform agenda taking place across east and southern Africa. Misesan Cara has successfully secured funding from the GHR Foundation to support and learn from our members' wider disability projects, and bring that expertise to the wider catholic care for children initiative taking place under oversight of the UISG (International Union of Secretaries General)," he says.

"Children with disabilities are often the first and always the last to leave institutional care and we hope that this initiative will help to change that situation and broaden adoption of support for families."

poor access to schools with programmes for disabled children, discrimination and stigma, broken families and other factors also contribute to the placement of children with disabilities in care institutions, sometimes for their entire lives.

With a deep, long-term understanding of the institutions and mechanisms in place to care for children with disabilities, Sister-led missionary organisations in Africa are ideally placed to lead the charge for care reform.

Misesan Cara's recently announced part-

better, more child-focused model of care.

Why is Care Reform important?

It is estimated that between 5.5 and 8 million children worldwide live in institutions. A Human Rights Watch figure from 2014 shows that in some countries close to 50 percent of these children in institutions are also living with some form of disability.

Tragically, research has also shown that institutionalisation profoundly and negatively



Teachers and students in a class for deadblind pupils at the Bauleni Special Needs Project and School (BSNP) in Lusaka, Zambia. Run by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the BSNP is Zambia's only school to provide education and support to children who are deafblind. Photo: Moses Mtonga

that support families to care for children with severe disabilities at home and provide opportunities for those children to reach their full potential."

Mr Moffett recalls being particularly struck by a visit to the home of a young boy named John, living on the outskirts of Lusaka, Zambia with his mother and siblings. The boy, who was born with Spina Bifida, has suffered physical and intellectual delays, and due to the family's lack of resources was unable to attend school or access rehabilitation. John had recently been connected by outreach workers to the Bauleni Special Needs Project and School in Lusaka, which now visits him regularly to provide basic schooling and at-home physical therapy to build his mobility. He is making great strides and becoming much more independent as a result of this specialised care and attention.

Missionaries setting the stage for change

Around the world, children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable populations in the world today and are the most at risk of having their fundamental rights violated. One of the most critical rights violations of children with disabilities is the right to live safely and securely in a home where they are loved and have adequate care and access to education.

For disabled children in the developing world, whether their disabilities are physical or intellectual, it's not just their special needs that make it hard for their families to keep them at home. Many other factors lead to children with disabilities often having to be taken into residential care, away from their families and communities. Poverty, lack of social services in their communities,



Misesan Cara staff tour construction of a new physical and psychosocial therapy block for students at the Bauleni Special Needs Project, funded by Misesan Cara. Photo: Moses Mtonga

nership with US-based, Catholic GHR Foundation and Catholic Care for Children International (CCCI) aims to lead the development of a new approach to care for children with disabilities in Africa, aimed at preventing children with disabilities from entering care institutions and also to transition disabled children from institutions back home or at least to home-like environments in the community.

Funded by a \$1million grant from GHR Foundation, the three-year initiative will research and promote home-based care and community-level services as a preferred model for caring for children with disabilities within the wider movement of care reform in Africa.

2,000 children in Four Countries

Along with GHR and CCCI, Misesan Cara is joining with five of its member congregations on the initiative: Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; Franciscan Missionaries of St Joseph; Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood; Missionary Sisters of the Assumption; and Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul.

All five congregations are active in providing quality care and education to children with disabilities, in home and community settings in Uganda, Zambia, South Africa, and Kenya. Collectively, they share a rich, long-standing expertise in working with children with disabilities at the community level, providing services that enable children to stay with their families and are currently involved in Misesan Cara-supported initiatives reaching nearly 2,000 children with disabilities.

Through an extensive religious network in Africa, these organisations will leverage their shared expertise and resources to advocate and build this change, enabling a

impacts a child's physical and psychological development, and can be associated with long-term mental health problems, emotional attachment problems, higher criminality, and suicide. It is also known that children with disabilities are up to seventeen times more likely to live in institutions than their peers, without disabilities.

This widespread evidence of the dangers of long-term institutionalisation is a driving basis for the move towards care reform, towards transitioning from institutional to family-based and community-based care.

At the heart of the movement is preventing the separation of families, and the reuniting of families in cases where separation has taken place. In situations where children cannot be reunited with their families, alternative care options, such as foster care and adoption, are prioritised over institutional care.

Meet the missionaries and projects at the heart of disability care for children

Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Uganda and Zambia)

(www.sacredheartsjm.org)

In Uganda, where the country's Population and Housing Census reports that the population of children aged 18 years and below living with disabilities is between 5.8% and 15%, the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SSHJM) operates the Children in Need (CHIN) project in Uganda's Mukono District. First established in 2004 to respond to the underserved needs of people with disabilities in the area, especially children with disabilities CHIN now operates a widespread programme throughout Mukono that encompasses inclusive education, health, livelihoods training, and human rights.



At the Children in Need (CHIN) project in Uganda, Physiotherapist and Community Based Rehabilitation staff conduct therapeutic exercises with students. Photo: Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary



On the outskirts of Lusaka, Zambia John (aged 5) and his mother Catherine, receive frequent home therapy and education visits from staff of the Bauleni Special Needs Project to help with John's physical and intellectual delays caused by Spina Bifida. Photo: Moses Mtonga

Another SSHJM project in Amuru District in Northern Uganda, is the Women and Children First Organisation (WACFO), a disability prevention and management project that applies a holistic and inclusive approach to supporting children and youth with disabilities in this largely rural, poor area. The project supports not only disabled children, but also their guardians and families, mothers to be, and the community at large, with the aim of achieving mainstream disability into all parts of the community.

The SSHJM also run projects in Zambia. In Lusaka, the Bauleni Special Needs Project (BSNP) is a recognised centre of excellence for inclusive education that provides quality, holistic and accessible education for more than 1,400 students, including children with special needs, orphaned and vulnerable children, and is the only school in the country with a programme for deafblind persons.

Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Saint Joseph (Kenya)

(www.fmsj.co.uk)

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Saint Joseph run the St. Francis Rehabilitation project in Malindi, Kilifi County, Kenya, where the poverty level stands at 42% and only a third of all people with disabilities are able to access adequate care for their needs.

The St Francis Rehabilitation project serves 75 children and youth with disabilities with therapies including physiotherapy, speech and occupational therapy, medication, and psychosocial support. The project strengthens home-based outreaches to support caregivers through training on best practices in the care of children with disabilities to maximise their health outcomes and reduce dependence in undertaking day-to-day tasks. Through community sensitisation, the project is also striving to create an enabling



Irish-based Misean Cara provides funding and support to the Bauleni Special Needs Project in Lusaka, Zambia, for its facilities and programmes serving children with disabilities. Photo: Moses Mtonga

environment for people with special needs to participate in society with prejudice or stigma.

Daughters of Charity (Kenya)

(www.daughtersofcharity.ie)

In Kiambu County, Kenya, the Daughters of Charity Services Thigio (DCST) operates day centres for people with physical and intellectual disabilities at three different primary schools in the area. The Special Needs Programs at DCST provide education and care for 118 children, youth, and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities. Children come to classes daily and parents attend classes as well to learn to participate in their child's development. Regardless of whether a child is in need of total respite care, or are preparing to enter Kenyan schools, they are cared for with compassion and caring in an atmosphere that enhances their dignity.

In Kiio, a semi-arid locale in Kitui County, eastern Kenya, many families go without basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing due to high poverty rates among the population. They also have limited access to medical care and education, creating few opportunities for care and therapy for children and young people living with special needs. The Daughters of Charity in Kiio work with 119 children and young people living with various disabilities. They also assist their families with basic needs and also training and information on caregiving and rights for people with disabilities.

Missionary Sisters of the Assumption (South Africa)

(<http://msassumption.org/>)

In South Africa, government policies are very clear on protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, however the reality is that there is far too little implementation of these policies. The Enkuthazweni project of the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption serves 100 intellectually disabled people from the rural coastal town of Port Alfred in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, the poorest province in South Africa, with two thirds of children living in poverty.

Enkuthazweni provides services to 40 children through its special needs educational programme; 30 children with severe multiple disabilities through its physical rehabilitation programme; and 30 young adults through its skills development and employment programme. Enkuthazweni also works closely with parents to offer training and support to improve parenting skills, attitudes and conditions at home. It is estimated that each family has five members in the household, which extends the reach of the programmes.

Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (Zambia)

(<https://fmdminternational.co.uk/>)

The Little Assisi Special School of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood has been run from a residential dwelling in Ng'ombe compound in the capital, Lusaka, for the past 16 years. Housed in just four rooms, it caters for a diverse range of ages and special needs, provid-

ing education and care to over 200 children with special needs since it opened.

Plans for expanded facilities for the school will provide specialised classrooms and equipment to cater to the range of pupils' needs – a specialist learning environment for those with autism, and for those with Down Syndrome and epilepsy. A skills section and computer lab will help teaching staff ensure that each pupil reaches their full potential, learning life skills through whatever means is most effective for them, and increasing their opportunity of finding a livelihood and achieving independence when they leave school. The new school also hopes to have a rehabilitation centre, offering physical and psychosocial therapies, to support primary school pupils and those aged up to five; and to provide counselling and training for the parents of children with disabilities.

About Misean Cara

Misean Cara is an Irish faith-based organisation established in 2004 to support overseas development work of Irish missionaries. With funding from Ireland's Irish Aid Programme, Misean Cara, through the unique missionary approach to development, supports its 77 missionary member organisations to deliver effective development projects on behalf of the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world. In 2022, Misean Cara supported 327 projects in 53 countries reaching almost 1.7 million people. To learn more about Misean Cara, including how to make a donation to support the work of Ireland's overseas missionaries, visit www.miseancara.ie.

Learn about Misean Cara's partners in the Reform for Care initiative

Catholic Care for Children International

(www.catholiccareforchildren.org)

"A FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD"

Catholic Care for Children International is a visionary initiative led by Catholic Sisters to ensure that every child grows up in a safe, nurturing family environment. Learn more at

GHR Foundation

(www.ghrfoundation.org)

"A hope-fueled global funder of service to people and their limitless potential for good."

GHR is a US-based foundation providing funds to organisations working in areas including global development and education. GHR supports projects rooted in dignity, equity and care as instruments of social justice for the most vulnerable and marginalized. Their work, and who they fund, is guided by two core truths:

- 1) All children deserve and thrive best in nurturing families or family-like environments.
- 2) The Catholic Church, related networks and allies can be a powerful force for good in serving, advocating, resourcing and creating space for the most vulnerable to lead the way forward.



Misean Cara CEO John Moffett on a visit to the Little Assisi Special School in Lusaka, Zambia. Photo: Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood

Capuchin Missions - With Gratitude for the Past with Hope for the Future

In October each year we are reminded that the Church is missionary. Pope Francis underlines this truth by his journeys to the margins or peripheries of the world. He, like his namesake St Francis, has made the World his cloister bringing the message of the Gospel to all corners of the world. The missionary heart seeks encounter with Christ and with our brothers and sisters. This desire has compelled Irish women and men to leave their homeland and travel to all parts of the World bringing with them Christ's peace, love and joy. The global influence of

Irish missionaries over the past hundred years has been immense. It has been a chapter of our history that should not be forgotten. The Irish Capuchins have been part of this endeavour from the early 1900's when Capuchin Friars from Ireland spread their wings from California to Capetown, from Zambia to Wellington, from Korea to Madagascar. The Psalmist writes "They go out sowing in tears, they come back rejoicing" (Psalm 126) and this has long been the cry of battle cry of the missionary. We can ask 'Has it been worthwhile? Has it been successful?' For a

full and honest answer to those questions, one would need to ask the peoples who received these messengers of the gospel. For the most part the little seed planted has borne fruit, in growth of the Church in mission lands as well as local vocations to our Capuchin way of life. "Unless the Lord builds the house in vain do the labourers toil." (Psalm 127) - We thank the Lord for being with us and blessing our labours over the past decades. We can look to the future with hope in the Lord who calls and sustains his people. For the most part Irish

missionaries are part of our history however a new chapter continues to be written as our missions are getting local vocations. These young men need our encouragement and material support to set up and aid their formation.
You can support the work of the Capuchin Missions through enrollment in the Seraphic Mass Association. More information is available from the Capuchin Mission Office, Church Street, Dublin 7 - Phone 01 873 1022 Email: capuchinmissions@gmail.com



Building of new church at Makometsane outstation



Serving Christmas lunch to the homeless in Parow



Mass 2018, St Anthony's, Siyabuswa



Siyabuswa 1st Communion

Mission and Synodality: A Symbiotic Journey in the Church

The convergence of the Synod on Synodality, which commenced on October 4th in Rome, with Mission Month holds significant meaning. Marking a departure from traditional synodal gatherings, this Synod stands out by actively incorporating a diverse range of voices, including women and laypeople, and addressing a wide range of reforms, reflecting the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. It uniquely underscores the Synod's commitment to embracing a more inclusive, participatory, and mission-driven Church.

This alignment underscores the symbiotic relationship between mission and synodality within the life of the Church. Just as mission calls us to engage with the world and share the Gospel, synodality encourages us to listen and to discern together as a community of believers. Both mission and synodality are rooted in the idea of going out, of reaching beyond ourselves, and of being open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. In this intricate dance of faith, mission, and synodality are inseparable partners, each informing and enriching the other.

Mission, the heartbeat of the Church's existence, propels us outward, urging us to carry the message of Christ's love and salvation to the world. It is the driving force that compels us to engage with the challenges and joys of humanity, to be the hands and feet of Christ in a broken world. In this sense, mission provides the purpose and direction for our synodal journey.

On the other hand, synodality, with its emphasis on communion, participation, and mission, informs and revitalises our mission. It reminds us that we are not solitary travellers on this mission but members of a diverse and interconnected community. Synodality encourages us to listen, to discern together, and to embrace the particularities of our faith and culture as we carry out our mission.

As Missionary Sisters, we understand mission to be a collaborative and transformative journey, guided by principles of partnership, mutual respect, and a reverence for the sacred art of listening. Mission is about a synergistic, transformative journey and a shared purpose that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. It's a sharing of gifts and a recog-

nition that each individual we encounter, regardless of their origin, has valuable contributions to offer in our collective pursuit of growth. Mission highlights our belief in the profound interconnectedness of humanity and our shared home. It is a commitment to fostering meaningful relationships that transcends the illusions of separateness between cultures and individuals - a vision of mission that embodies the divine choreography of compassion, understanding, and unity; and holds a deep appreciation for the diversity of human experiences.

Religious Sisters Part of Synodal Process

Several of our Sisters actively participated in the synodal processes in Ireland, contributing to the rich tapestry of voices shaping the Church's evolving narrative. Our Provincial Leader, Sister Kathleen McGarvey, was one of fourteen delegates from Ireland to participate in the assembly held in Prague earlier this year. This was one of seven continental assemblies that took place in February and March in preparation for the Synod on Synodality currently tak-

ing place and continuing in October 2024.

In an important moment for the Church, five women religious representing the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) are participating in the first session of the Synod 2021-2024, themed "For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission". Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles and UISG President, Mary T Barron OLA, is one of these women. Other participants are: UISG Executive Secretary, Patricia Murray IBVM, Elizabeth Mary Davis RSM, Elysée Izerimana, Op. S.D.N. and Maria Nirmalini, A.C.

Sister Mary Barron, in a broader statement on UISG's participation in the Synod, conveyed her enthusiasm, stating, "We respond with joy to Pope Francis' call to participate in the Synod of Bishops and to commit ourselves to the ecclesial journey of the Synod on communion, participation and mission. We are convinced that religious life, with its experience of community life and discernment, can help the Church achieve this synodal conversion." She believes that consecrated life is strongly called to synodality at this moment. UISG's presence at

the Synod carries with it the hope of bringing a prophetic voice to the discussions.

Synodality is a journey that transcends structures and engages the very heart of what it means to be the Church. Pope Francis eloquently captures the essence of synodality when he describes it as "a style, a walk together, what the Lord expects from the Church of the third millennium."

In an era where the Catholic Church seeks a more inclusive approach, UISG's

active role in the Synod brings the hope for a commitment to fostering greater unity, participation, and shared mission within the Church. As these committed women Religious join the conversation at the Synod, we hold them in prayer, recognising that their presence and contributions will play a crucial role in shaping the Church's path towards a more synodal and inclusive future, where the voices and experiences of all believers are valued and embraced.



Mary T Barron, OLA Congregational Leader



Courageously committed to God's Reign of Peace and Justice



Prayer

Simplicity

Zeal

Mission

Courage

Faith

Fidelity

The joys of our Mission are many and varied. Being part of a community of believers and living out a vocation of service to God and others is incredibly rewarding. There is a great sense of joy in deepening one's spiritual life, being part of a spiritual family, and living according to a set of values and principles that promote peace, love, and justice. Our vocation provides us with the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with others and serve as a living witness to the power of the Gospel. Ultimately, our vocation to consecrated life is a beautiful way to share in the joy of the Gospel and witness to the presence of God in our lives.

We are an international group of Religious sisters; apostles rooted in faith and hope. Ready to risk it all for the Lord.

We strive to be examples of "Women in Communion". Living in international communities, we continue to fulfill the intense missionary dream of our founder, Father Augustine Planque.

There are many ways in which you can share in our mission, find out more on our website.

WWW.OLAIRELAND.IE



For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in" (Matthew 25: 35)



Displaced people come from every continent. Conflicts, wars, persecutions, natural disasters, poverty, and the effects of climate change are the main reasons people are forced to flee their homeland. In our response to the situation of migration "we find ourselves at a crossroads of civilisation". Pope Francis in Marseille on 22 Sept. 2023. The United Nations estimates there were 103 million refugees at the start of 2023. There are 35 million minors displaced and over 1 million have been born while fleeing emergencies.

The Response of our Salesian Missionaries

Salesian missionaries are in direct daily contact with refugees and displaced people. Fr Timothy Ploch, director Salesian Missions New York states, "Salesian missionaries live among the communities they work in and are on the front lines of the refugee crisis. They provide support and services for refugees and internally displaced persons whose lives have been affected by war, persecution, famine, and natural disasters."

At Tijuana in Mexico 'Padre Casa', a welcoming

"Salesian missionaries live among the communities they work in and are on the front lines of the refugee crisis. They provide support and services for refugees and internally displaced persons whose lives have been affected by war, persecution, famine, and natural disasters"



Children playing at the Salesian Mission Centre at Juba, South Sudan.

three thousand people in front of our gates. Almost exclusively women and children fleeing the war. I knew I had to help them and provide shelter."

"They always walk beside the displaced people and offering hope in a concrete way through education, technical and professional formation, and showing them the face of the God who loves them"

Two Salesian mission centres, Don Bosco Ngangi and Don Bosco Shasha in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been offering shelter, support, food and medical aid to thousands of displaced people due to the war in the country.

Salesian Missionaries of Hope – Lighting a candle in the darkness

The United Nations, refugee agencies, local governments, care agencies, Salesian NGOs and donors all help the missionaries access resources. Our approach is collaborative which is essential.

Pope Francis has described refugees as "People like everyone, who have been deprived by war of their homes, their jobs, their parents and their



Refugees at Palabek Refugee Camp, Uganda.

friends." They need hope and a way forward. A very large cohort are children and young people. At Palabek and Kakuma in Kenya, primary, secondary and vocational centres have been put in place to educate the young and give them a future. Counselling centres are provided to assist the traumatised.

Kakuma has a population of 200,000 and over half are minors. In this camp there are refugees fleeing the tribal wars in South Sudan, others trying to escape political persecution in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Ethiopia or from the Eritrean dictatorship. More are fleeing social and political insecurity in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo or civil war and fundamentalism in Somalia.

For this troubled group of people education for coexistence is the greatest need. In

the camp the Dinka and the Nuer of South Sudan play together; Muslims and Christians are studying side by side; Ethiopians with Burundians, Rwandans with Eritreans. Young people learn to know, value and respect each other, and to live together. While being educated they are preparing to be people of reconciliation in their various countries.

Fr Ángel Fernández Artime is the Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation visited Kakuma in 2017 and observed that, "At the United Nations refugee camp at Kakuma people of the most diverse races, tribes, customs, and religious professions all live together. The Salesian technical school provides courses and trades to prepare the young for life after the refugee camp."

A Salesian technical centre in Egypt has provided employment skills training to 3,000 Sub-Saharan African, Yemeni, and Syrian refugees, and vulnerable Egyptians. A similar project in Ethiopia is benefiting migrants, returning refugees and internally displaced people.

All the Salesian provinces in Europe have welcomed Ukrainian refugees creating spaces for them in schools, youth centres, hostels and parishes. Earthquakes such as the one in Syria in 2023 impact on missionaries. Terrified people sheltered at the Salesian centre in Aleppo. It was necessary to provide support for one thousand people.

In his 2022 Message for The World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis wrote that the building of the Kingdom of God must have people from the peripheries at the centre. He said, "Eve-

rybody must be included. The Kingdom of God is to be built with the most vulnerable, for without them it would not be the Kingdom that God wants. The inclusion of those most vulnerable is the necessary condition for full citizenship in God's Kingdom."

Salesian missionaries live this vision. They always walk beside the displaced people and offering hope in a concrete way through education, technical and professional formation, and showing them the face of the God who loves them.

After his visit to Kakuma Fr Ángel said, "I came away with a heart filled with the joy of having touched with my own hands, in the midst of poverty, so much humanity and so great a presence of the God of Love." Br Máximo Herrera, a Salesian from Argentina living at Palabek has stated, "I believe I have learned to pray since I have been in Africa because I have seen the commitment and conviction with which the refugees and displaced people pray and worship."

Through their deeds and actions Salesian missionaries bring hope and new possibilities to refugees and displaced people in many locations throughout the world. No matter what their ethnic, religious or cultural background displaced people seeking assistance are always made welcome at the mission centres.

Don Bosco Aid Ireland supports many Salesian missionary projects throughout the world. We are very grateful to all who support us in any way with this work.

Proclaiming God to the poor the Salesians' mission



Salesian missionaries proclaim God in word and deed to the marginalised, Fr Dan Carroll SDB tells Ruadhán Jones

For almost 150 years, Salesian missionaries have been bringing God's word and hope to the poorest and most marginalised in society, says Fr Dan Carroll SDB.

The congregation's charism is to bring "the Word of God to young people, particularly to those who are poor, marginalised and abandoned", the Irish Salesian continues.

They do this both by word and action, witnessing to the Faith through their acts of charity, and then teaching the good news to all.

The Salesians have a missionary presence on most of the continents, including hard-hit countries in Africa such as South Sudan and the Congo, as well as parts of South America, India and Europe.

"Work for the migrants and immigrants and internally displaced people has been going on for decades in the Salesian mission work," Fr Carroll tells *The Irish Catholic*.

Turin

"The mission work began in 1875 when a group of Salesians went from Turin to work with a group of Italian

migrants in Argentina. A few years later, in 1879, they began to work with what we would now call indigenous peoples in Patagonia."

The congregation was just 16 years old when it began its missionary work. Founded by St Don Bosco in 1859, the congregation focuses on attending to the needs of young people.

Don Bosco founded the congregation "in response to the great need he saw in Turin" to help young boys who, because of rapid economic change, were forced to move from farms to big cities.

They weren't able to cope with the changes "and became a major problem. When he began ministry, he noticed this and in 1841, he began a ministry with those young people," Fr Carroll explains. "Basically many of them were refugees, they had come a long distance to that place. All the problems of the modern world were in that that group at that stage."

Following on from Don Bosco, the first call for each Salesian is to go out and proclaim God's word, bringing his hope to those who need it.

“In Ireland now we have Salesian missionaries from India, from Vietnam, a couple from Nigeria and one from East Timor”

First, though, they strive to meet people's material needs, whether it be "education, health needs, having a direction in life... welcoming young people in particular", says Fr Carroll.

While much of the congregation's missionary work has been carried out in developing nations, the Irish Salesian says



Salesian volunteers help to organise aid to refugees from the war against Ukraine.

the congregation has noticed a growing need for a missionary focus in Europe too: "We need missionaries here in our part of Europe as well since the cultural change and so forth, there are a lot of young people who haven't heard the word of God. That's certainly part of the focus."

Trend

There is a "reverse missionary trend", he says, highlighting the changing demographics for vocations: "Our missionaries were coming from the Western world, now they come from everywhere. In Ireland now we have Salesian



Dan Carroll, Don Bosco Aid Ireland

missionaries from India, from Vietnam, a couple from Nigeria and one from East Timor."

In Ireland, the congregation has a relatively small membership. They work in secondary schools and agricultural colleges predominantly, and also with vulnerable people in Dublin city. A number of Irish Salesians went 'on the missions' in Africa, South America and particularly India.

“The missionaries in India are reaching out to all these different caste groups and ethnic groups. Witness there is the first thing and they proclaim where they can”

One aspect of Salesian life the Irish province is seeking to promote is volunteer centres, Fr Carroll tells this paper.

"We offer opportunities to people who would like to go to a missionary centre maybe for a few months or a year, just for

that experience. Volunteering is quite big in the congregation in other places in South America, in Europe and so forth. We're trying to develop that, it's an important part of it."

In some parts of the world, the missionaries' work can be fraught with danger, due to hostility to Christianity and other minority faiths. Fr Carroll gives the example of North Africa, where the word of God can't be openly proclaimed.

"But by their example and their values, social services, education centres and refugee centres, they give witness to the Gospel," Fr Carroll stresses. "The missionaries in India are reaching out to all these different caste groups and ethnic groups. Witness there is the first thing and they proclaim where they can."

Europe

Looking at Europe, "there is a lot of work in nearly all the parishes and there are Salesian centres in all European countries, supporting migrants and displaced people, supporting young people who are very poor and not able to access education," Fr Carroll explains.

"Skills education has become a focus of our work, enabling young people

to have skills that will hopefully help them enter the workplace. That was one of Don Bosco's core themes, helping young people to take their place in society, to be good citizens and good Christians. That encapsulates what he was about."

“Misean Cara has been wonderful in supporting the projects we have sent to them over the years”

Over the many decades that the Salesians have been sending out missionaries, the Irish people have been very generous to their noble cause.

"People very kindly and generously respond to our requests for support for places like South Sudan, the Congo, the Philippines, Asia, Syria," Fr Carroll says gratefully.

"Misean Cara has been wonderful in supporting the projects we have sent to them over the years. When we look back over time, all the generations of Irish people have supported missions in India, in South America – an enormous amount of support has been forwarded to the missions."

“We need missionaries here in our part of Europe as well since the cultural change and so forth, there are a lot of young people who haven't heard the word of God”

Celebrating 86 Years of Healing

Since we, Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM), were founded in 1937 by Mother Mary Martin, we have been bringing hope to people in some of the poorest and most remote areas of the world. As MMMs we bring our faith, skills and tenacity to the work that needs to be done despite the possible challenges of the place or situation. Over the years, our work has changed, but the focus of bringing health and healing and the love of God to women and children in need has been constant.

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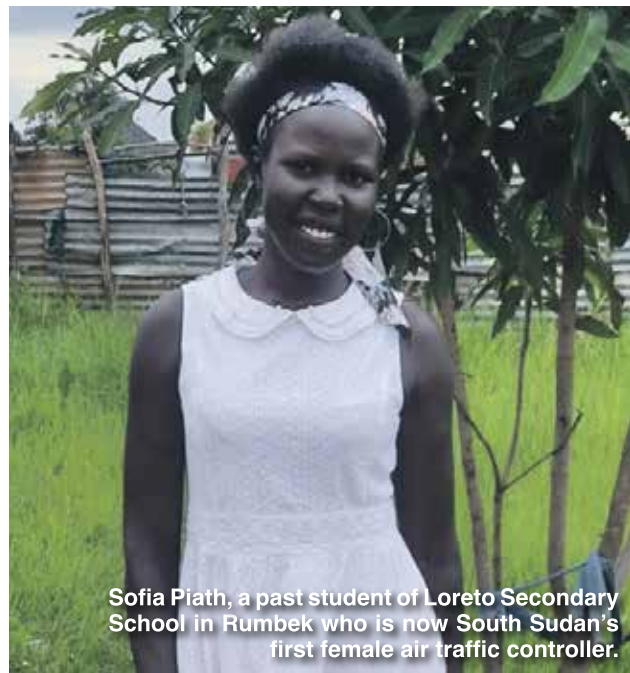
Loreto Sisters – Transforming Lives with Commitment and Love

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, more commonly known as the Loreto Sisters, have missions in 24 countries. We work towards promoting the dignity and liberation of all, particularly women and children. We are involved in both formal and informal Education, in Advocacy & Human Rights, Pastoral Work, Health, and in Spirituality & Faith development. Our mission is based on the vision of our founder, Mary Ward, which inspires all to reach their full potential. It is underpinned by our values of freedom, justice, joy and truth, giving hope through compassionate and committed service. We, with our lay colleagues, work to support and empower some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

SOUTH SUDAN: Girls Education and Empowerment

The Loreto Mission in Rumbek, South Sudan started in 2008 with a secondary school for girls. Over the years it has established itself as one of the leading schools in this newly emerging nation. This is in a context where, shockingly, girls are more likely to die in childbirth than to complete second level education and where 53% of girls are married before their 18th birthday. As well as providing quality education, the school acts as a refuge and protector of girls who are at risk of a forced early marriage. Over the years the Loreto mission in Rumbek has expanded to provide primary education and health care. It is a prime example of the effectiveness of the missionary approach to development with its ability to reach, and uplift, people living in extreme poverty.

The school pursues an excellence which is appropriate to each student and strives to maximise the students potential. Many of the 345 girls who have graduated through the school to date, have been supported to proceed to 3rd level. Sofia Piath is one such past student. Sofia recently became South Sudan's first female Air Traffic Controller. In a recent interview she stated that "I love challenges. When you are told you cannot do this, you really have to challenge it, so that you can really make it".



Sofia Piath, a past student of Loreto Secondary School in Rumbek who is now South Sudan's first female air traffic controller.

ALBANIA, KENYA and INDIA: Fighting against Human Trafficking

It is estimated by the International Labour Organisation that Human Trafficking generates profits of \$150 Billion yearly for criminal gangs. Only 1-2% of victims are rescued and, in Europe, less than 1% of traffickers are convicted. In places like West Bengal in India, Kangemi slum in Kenya and in Albania the Loreto Sisters have established professional, committed and fearless teams who work collaboratively strengthening the capacity of law enforcement, judiciary and other organisations, to fight against human trafficking. They provide empathetic support to victims / survivors of trafficking that is trauma informed, person centred and designed to empower, enabling the survivor to stand on their own two feet as dignified members of society.

Survivors are the most important people in combating human trafficking. An example is Enkeleda (not her real name), an Albanian trafficked to the UK, who had been terribly abused in the sex market. She was eventually rescued

by a client in one of the brothels. Enkeleda, in her process of recovery, wished to denounce her traffickers. She had been collaborating with law officers for over one year when, sadly, her traffickers took revenge and murdered her brother in Albania. The Loreto Team in Albania was requested to safeguard Enkeleda as she travelled from the UK to Albania to attend her brother's funeral. This was accomplished by collaborating with trusted police officers and shelter staff. Enkeleda was eventually successful in convicting the traffickers. Consequent to this denunciation many other girls were rescued from human trafficking.

The Loreto Sisters team in West Bengal pioneered an innovative model where children, trained about issues like trafficking and early marriage, identify vulnerable children among their peers. Any child rights violations are shared with the Loreto team who assess the situation and make the necessary follow-ups. Arifa Khatun is one such club member who was awarded for her courage in stopping her own child marriage and for creating awareness on the issue. The guidance and training provided by the team gave her the awareness and confidence to understand the severity of the situation and to stand up for herself.



Arifa Khatun awarded for her courage in standing up against early marriage in Kolkata, India

INDIA: Education and Empowerment of Migrant Workers

Whole families migrate from very poor areas near West Bengal, to work in the brickfields from around November to May each year. For the remainder of the year, they return to their home villages. Children, as young as five, are engaged in making the bricks. While in the brickfields the children have no access to education. Since 2008, a curriculum, geared to the needs of the children, is delivered by the Loreto team in an interactive and fun way. Classes are conducted in the open air. Over the years the project has evolved to include a health programme and awareness campaigns on rights and entitlements.



Children attending class within the brickfields

In more recent years the project has explored ways of supporting the children to continue with their education when they return to their home villages. They engaged with the families, local schools, and local government departments. In 2022 this initiative was a remarkable success with 577 children enrolling in their local school when they returned from the brickfields. In some cases children also stayed with their grandparents, or other family relatives, in their native village and attended their local school for the full year while their parents migrated. These children are now becoming the first generation in their families to complete their education.

ZAMBIA: Providing Hope and Healthcare in Remote Lukulu

The Loreto Sisters have a mission in Lukulu, a small remote town located in one of the most impoverished areas in the country. The majority of the people eke out a living from subsistence agriculture on poor sandy soils, with minuscule employment or tertiary education opportunities. This creates hopelessness among young people, causing some to drop out of school. Health services are grossly understaffed. Any qualified staff deployed to work in the area want to leave given its remoteness.

With a desire to address the needs of the people, and in collaboration with the Government and diocese, the Loreto Sisters established the Sancta Maria College of Nursing and Midwifery as a Grant Aided College which provides trained and skilled health workers for deployment within the local area. By training local people this is strengthening quality primary health care accessibility to the marginalized community while also providing an opportunity for employment. The 165 students currently studying in the college have the potential to break out of the cycle of poverty.



Lizzy Ipako is a nursing student at the college. She is the first in her family to have a third level education. As she says herself the college has "made my dreams of being a nurse come true".

i The Loreto Sisters would like to acknowledge, and thank, all who support the work we do, our supporters, the Loreto schools and Miseen Cara. If you would like to support the work we do please contact us at +353 1 4933827, email mwiireland@loreto.ie or visit our website www.loreto.ie/mary-ward-international

Hearts on Fire, Feet on the move: The world is a place of mission



Fr Nicky Hennity, a priest from Kilkeel, Co Down, is marking 50 years of missionary work in Africa that has taken him from the slums of Kenya to Rwanda, in the aftermath of the genocide that saw almost a million people slaughtered. His dedication to helping the underprivileged in poverty and conflict-stricken regions was celebrated at an event in Kilkeel during the summer, where his golden jubilee was marked with friends, family and colleagues. Fr Hennity returned very recently to his work with people living in the slums of Mombasa in Kenya.

When Fr Hennity first arrived in Kenya, the country had declared its independence a decade beforehand, and there was still a sense of great hope. While he was aware that Kitui was a poor place, nothing could have prepared him for the levels of poverty that he witnessed when he finally arrived there. The region was very underdeveloped, both education-wise and health-wise.

Fr Hennity and his fellow missionaries worked along side community leaders in



Fr Nick Hennity

sharing the gospel message and in developing agriculture, training workers in ox ploughing, building on his own knowledge and experience from growing up in a farming background in Kilkeel. One of the challenges faced were the rains coming or not coming at the right time for the seeds, as the communities were growing their own food. Fr Hennity was always impressed by the determination of the people to overcome hurdles. They never gave up, despite the setbacks they encountered. They had a great belief in God as they could see his presence all over.

Fr Hennity was often critical of the Kenyan government during his first spell in the country, highlighting cor-

ruption and failures to direct resources to the communities that needed them the most. As a result, he was eventually expelled from Kenya and was even escorted to the airport by officials keen to see him leave. After returning to Ireland for a spell, he agreed to travel again to east Africa in 1994, this time to Rwanda. Months beforehand, the worst period of genocide that tore the country apart had taken place. The genocide occurred during the Rwandan civil war and saw the Tutsi minority targeted by militias from the Hutu ethnic group. Over 800,000 people were killed, with some estimating that the death toll was over a million.

Fr Hennity arrived in Rwanda in late 1994, after the genocide, but there were still killings taking place and tensions remained. The Co Down missionary travelled to Cyanika, a settlement close to the Ugandan border, where he was faced with a community devastated by the bloodshed. He found the church being used to house refugees, with the previous priest, a Tutsi, having been killed in the slaughter. He saw sights there that will never leave him. There were a number of mass graves in the area, with one just outside the Church. This held the bodies of between five and six thousand victims. Another larger mass grave nearby held up to 10,000 bodies, that had been shovelled into the earth with diggers. The mass killings had been encouraged by Hutu soldiers, with countless lives being extinguished with machete blades. Fr Hennity learned how the brutal genocide, that saw most lives taken in a short period of around 100 days, even saw families torn apart, with husbands slaughtering wives in some cases. The sheer scale of the horrors was overwhelming.

Fr Hennity stayed in Rwanda for 12 years, helping rebuild his adopted community. Along with assisting victims of the massacres, he also worked with the perpetrators as they began to acknowledge the brutality of their actions. The hatred and division reminded him at times of the conflict back home in Northern Ireland. He saw that, like the Troubles, the problem wasn't the people – it was the politicians who preyed on people's fears. Tutsis had been dehumanised and were called cockroaches, that

needed to be exterminated.

Trying to bring a sense of normality back to a region that had witnessed so much evil was no small feat, but Fr Hennity made small steps, such as organising soccer games and getting the local school up and running, despite lack of government support.

Following a sabbatical in the USA, Fr Hennity later travelled to take up a new assignment in Mombasa, where he worked in one of the city's slum areas, home to more than 40,000 people with no sewage system or running water. There, he took up challenges including helping to build nurseries and health centres, while encouraging residents to engage in environmental projects. He has spent 12 years with the people of Mombasa.

Following his golden jubilee celebrations, Fr Hennity returned to a parish in the slum area of Mombasa to begin another chapter in an extraordinary life of missionary work. Missio Ireland supports missionaries like Fr Hennity.

What is the World Mission Sunday?

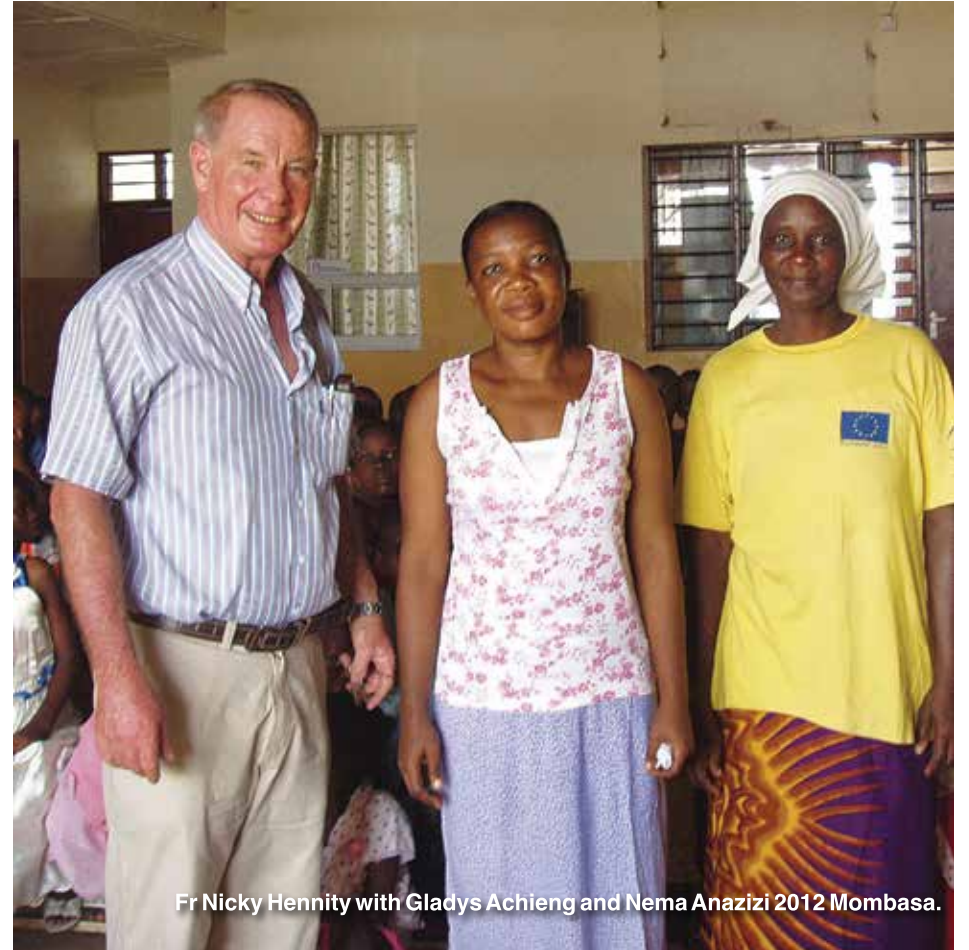
World Mission Sunday is the Holy Father's annual appeal in support of overseas mission. It takes place in every single parish where the Church is present.

When is World Mission Sunday?

World Mission Sunday always falls on the second last Sunday in October, meaning this year it will be celebrated over the weekend of Sunday, 22nd October.

Why is World Mission Sunday important?

All offerings made on behalf of World Mission Sunday become



Fr Nicky Hennity with Gladys Achieng and Nema Anazizi 2012 Mombasa.

part of the Holy Father's Universal Solidarity Fund. This Fund is essential not only for missionaries, but for the future of the Church. It supports missionary activities in over 1,100 mission dioceses, which are mostly found in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

What Does World Mission Sunday Support?

The Holy Father's Universal Solidarity Fund helps missionaries care for some of the world's most vulnerable people by going where others fear to tread. Missionaries like

Father Nicky Hennity walked hand in hand with the local people whom he served in Rwanda, which was devastated by genocide. He and other missionaries who worked there endeavoured to bring a sense of normality back to a region that has witnessed such evil.

Who organises World Mission Sunday?

Missio Ireland coordinates World Mission Sunday. It is the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission and is part of a global network serving the Church in over 120 countries.

How are funds received on World Mission Sunday dispersed?

All projects go through the local bishops and nuncios in the country where funds are requested. These are vetted and checked by the Pontifical Mission Societies in Rome. Projects are allocated to Ireland to match the amount of funds that are available, following the completion of the audit. This year, we will be sending €1,644,542 to missionary projects abroad.

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Missio Ireland is the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission and missionaries.
It is part of a global network of charities serving the Catholic Church in over 120 countries.

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Supporting missionaries and seminaries to share Christ's message in a world at flux



Missionaries, as Christ's ambassadors, continue to give people tremendous hope, Missio Ireland's director tells **Chai Brady**

Irish missionaries are growing older and many have been forced to retire due to ill-health, but the fruits of their hard work remain, including the training of young seminarians all over the world to assist the vulnerable and the needy despite the dangers.

Missio Ireland is the Irish branch of the Pontifical Mission Society – which is the Pope's charity for overseas mission. Overall the charity reaches across five continents and supports more than 1,000 mission dioceses.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the National Director of Missio Ireland, Fr Michael Kelly SPS, spoke of the often-quiet work of missionaries around the world and what the charity is doing to ensure the creation of a new generation of priests – many of whom he believes may come to Ireland to assist where needed.

Fr Kelly, who is a member of St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers), was appointed in November 2021 following more than 30 years of missionary service in places such as Grenada and South Africa.

Dangers

Asked why many missionaries remain when others might leave a community due to a variety of dangers, Fr Kelly said they “stay on in solidarity with the poor and the marginalised, being ambassadors for Christ, their presence there with the people gives them such hope”.

“I think that's why, despite tremendous dangers, they continue to stay on and support the people. The love of Christ urges us on,” he said.

Data gathered by Vatican news agency *Fides*, each year, revealed that in 2022, 18 missionaries lost their lives violently across the world – a reminder of the risks they take. The deaths include 12 priests, one brother, three women reli-

Zimbabwean children are pictured in a file photo carrying vegetables as they walk past a house in Harare.



gious, one seminarian, and one lay person. Nine missionaries were killed in Africa, eight missionaries in the Americas, and one in Asia.

“The laity in mission countries are tremendous people, they're really involved in the Church, in the life of the Church and so on”

Asked about Ireland's view of missionaries nowadays, Fr Kelly said while a great sense of faith was handed down from generation to generation, “I suppose as we got more secular, God gets pushed a little bit to the side in people's lives, unless there's a disaster of some kind”.

He added: “In the past every parish would have had a number of priests, brothers or nuns on the missions so their families would be talking about them. Nowadays most Irish missionaries are very old and a lot of them are back in Ireland and retired at this stage, but then there's new fruit emerging. In our society [Kiltegan] now our superior general is Nigerian, and also on the council one person is from Zambia and the other from Kenya.

“This year we had 11 ordained and next year we have

ten and now they're thinking of sending some of those back to Ireland so hopefully that will help to invigorate a sense of Faith and mission in people's lives.”

Fr Kelly said the Kiltegan are training a “new generation of priests to come to Ireland or to Europe”, saying it is the missionary work Ireland did but in reverse.

With Missio Ireland's support of seminaries abroad, in Africa and Asia, “we're actually preparing the next generations of priests that we may have – but also the numbers might increase here as well”.

Shortage

However, he added that even in parishes where there is a shortage of priests, who may only be seen perhaps once a month, there are places in which it is the catechists keeping the Faith alive.

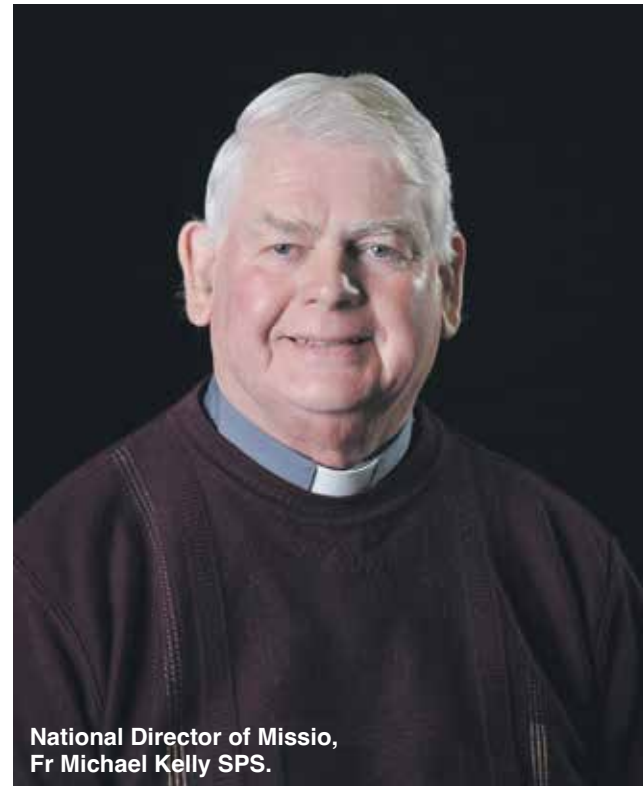
He said: “In one sense even though we don't have too many priests here, we're still very well off compared with some African countries and parishes. The laity in mission countries are tremendous people, they're really involved in the Church, in the life of the Church and so on. I'm 45 years a priest this year but I've never actually worked in a parish that didn't have a parish council at that time. They are involved in a big way, and a lot is about listening to them in a big way. In many ways we've been living out synodality as

missionaries over time, so this has come more into a European context at this stage.”

A lot of the projects Missio Ireland support are run by missionaries or local religious people. A project is sent through the local bishop – if he signs off on it – then will go to the papal nuncio of the country, who sends it on to the Pontifical Mission Society in Rome who go through the projects and then send them out.

The Pontifical Mission Society gave Missio Ireland 16 projects dedicated to children, mostly in Africa. “So we fund those projects directly through the nuncio of the country and the local bishop and then down to the projects. So there's a good record and tracking of all the funds and then reporting back afterwards,” Fr Kelly said, adding that they are currently supporting children in poverty in Calcutta and “I was looking at those children, and the help they get reminded me very much of my own time in South Africa where we were feeding more than 1,000 orphans whose parents had died from AIDS.

“Initially we started with 50 children, we managed to get food and I suppose it brought home to me the extent of how we can help children with these different projects. At that time Missio was sending us some



National Director of Missio, Fr Michael Kelly SPS.

funds from their office in Malta,” he said.

One day he saw a little boy cleaning off dishes, and said to one of the ladies cooking, “that little fellow, his mother trained him very well”, she replied “Father, he is taking those scraps home to feed another child, nothing is wasted here”. Fr Kelly said it reminded him of the Gospel story of Jesus feeding the multitudes, saying “they picked up the scraps afterwards so noth-

ing was wasted – the children were living out of the Gospel”.

Support

Missio Ireland continue to support, with the help of donations, the work of the Church's mission across the world with many of their projects that help children currently being in Africa – in countries like Chad and Benin. This would involve feeding programmes, various materials to support schools, nurseries, clinics and more.

Serving those furthest behind in South Sudan

As we get closer to Christmas, places like South Sudan lie heavy on my heart. As the youngest country in the world, getting its independence 12 years ago, it's still one of the poorest countries in the world. Life expectancy is 57 years...a far cry from our 82 years in Ireland.

My woes and stresses of being a working mum with 3 young kids, is a world apart from what most are enduring in South Sudan. With Christmas approaching, I take a quiet joy in dodging the panic present buying for friends and in-laws. I've long given up on deliberating over what presents to buy – presents that are meant to somehow show how dear they are to me. Mind you, if I'm honest, it's more about never actually managing to get it right. This year, my plan is that they'll all get the same present, a gift for someone in South Sudan. That's a little stressor, I'm able to put neatly aside.

Hardship

I've always struggled to understand how a person can live through constant, unrelenting stress alongside the grief and trauma of losing their home, or someone in their family. How someone can live through so much hardship, yet still find a way to smile, laugh and get through the day. In Ireland, I don't think we give enough acknowledgment to the resilience that some of us have had to build up throughout our childhood, particularly when it's saturated with trauma. Even at that, it can still be a mere fragment of what many in South Sudan have had to go through in their own childhood years. I asked Irish Jesuit, Tony O'Riordan, from Cork, who worked for over four years in Maban, South Sudan, how he made sense of it...how he understood where people got the energy to continue. Hope. Compartmentalisation. Grief is no less to the grief we have in Ireland but feeding your family requires you to get up early in the morning, start the charcoal fire, set about your day walking to get as much water as you can carry from a river/borehole miles away, then walk to the market to get a small plastic bag of long-life milk, to just make porridge for the kids. A task that takes 3 minutes for us in Ireland with a microwave, can literally take hours for someone

living in a camp or rural area in South Sudan.

There are over 2 million people displaced in South Sudan – that's equivalent to all the people in Munster and Connaught living in a temporary setting that is not their home. As some of us start thinking of how we'll celebrate Christmas day, 2 million South Sudanese are dreaming of finally making it back to their original homes. Conflict in Sudan, has forced them back down to South Sudan. Instead of being greeted by hearty Christmas dinners, warmth and comfort, they are returning to a bleak reality of finally making it back to their original homesteads. They're not sure if their homestead is still there, or if someone else is occupying it...maybe by another displaced family, much like they were for the last 10-20 years. I've asked many returnees, what do you do, when you finally return to your original home and find a strange family living under the tree that you've planted yourself all those years ago. Their answer – patience. Many colleagues I worked with, talked about having to set up make-shift shelters on the outskirts of the camp, waiting for a time to come when it would be safe enough for them to get their homestead back, and for that family themselves to move on.

A tree that was planted in a homestead a generation ago, may not hold the warm memories we might expect – sheltering the family from the midday sun, or heavy rains. That tree could be holding so many memories and trauma, from rebels attacking, rounding up and killing children – neighbours children they had watched growing up. I remember all too well, a woman my age, Monica Illiha, still working her way through secondary school, point out a tree deep in the bush to me where she hid when the rebels last attacked, and that I should remember the route, as that's where we were to meet if the rebels were to come again.

Counselling

Many families won't even make it all the way home this Christmas, and will see themselves lucky to make it just across the border, to camps like Renk, where we are responding with partner, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), providing relief items and psychosocial counselling.



Akir and her baby at a transit centre in Renk, a bordering town between Sudan and South Sudan

I get texts weekly from former colleagues I used to work with. More often, it's actually texts from their children who were toddlers 20 years ago when I first worked in South Sudan. It's rarely an ask, or a request for a transfer. More often it's just a text to say hello. To know that someone on another continent has the time to chat, to say a quick hello.

Working with the missionary congregations, in South Sudan, brings with it an immense sense of duty to reach those furthest left behind – to reach parts of South Sudan where the government and other NGOs can't reach, as they can be restricted by strict security protocols. There's a sense of pride that comes with that, for personnel that work with the missionaries. Personnel know they can get higher paid jobs elsewhere, but their heart is in serving those furthest behind.

South Sudan lights such a fire in our hearts, it's difficult to move on, once you've witnessed the immense need. Sligo man, Shane Burke, who went out to Kenya almost

14 years ago to work with the Jesuits, is still with us – working with JRS and serving at the moment as Acting Country Director for South Sudan. He's part of the team responding to the refugee crisis in Renk, South Sudan. We also welcome home, Cavan woman, Noelle Fitzpatrick, who dedicated four years to the role as JRS South Sudan Country Director – leading the teams in Juba, Yambio and Maban.

Richard O'Dwyer, from Marino, Dublin worked in South Sudan for 7 years, as a Jesuit missionary in Lobone

and Rumbek. Not an easy feat for anyone. A world apart from this current work as Parish Priest in Gardiner Street, yet not a day would go by without Richard remembering South Sudan and the people he served. As the Jesuit parish gets ready for their Christmas Concert, I can't help but be moved by the videos being sent to me over WhatsApp, from the Jesuit schools in South Sudan – students singing Christmas carols and teachers sending Christmas greetings – which we hope to show as the congregation settles into their seats at St

Francis Xavier Church for the Christmas Concert. The sense of solidarity is humbling.

We launch our Christmas Appeal for refugees and returnees in Renk this month. As Christmas approaches, please think of the people in South Sudan. They are thinking of you.

i Emer Kerrigan is Operations Manager of Irish Jesuits International. To donate to the South Sudan Emergency Response, contact Irish Jesuits International on 01 836 6509 or donate online at www.iji.ie/donate

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World Report

IN BRIEF

Synod members ask 'for greater discernment' on sexuality

● Participants in the Synod on Synodality have asked "for greater discernment on the teaching of the Church on the subject of sexuality", a Vatican spokesman said at a press briefing on October 11.

The revelation seems to be at odds with synod organisers' repeated insistence that the monthlong assembly will not take up doctrinal questions but will instead focus on how the Church can better listen to its members.

The discussion of sexual doctrine came during the synod members' work in the morning session, shared Paolo Ruffini, the president of the synod's communications commission.

During that session, participants focused on the theme of "mercy and truth."

The theme includes a controversial question on "what concrete steps are needed to welcome those who feel excluded from the Church today because of their status or sexuality".

Synod our turn to speak say Oceania, Africa delegates

● Synod on Synodality delegates from Africa and Oceania said this week their communities are already living out synodality – and they are ready for their voices to finally be heard by the universal Church.

A representative of the bishops' conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands said she is happy the Church and Pope Francis invited those two countries to participate,

despite their small size.

"For many years we have been listening and now we would like to speak. And we would like you to listen," Grace Wrakia said, addressing journalists at a press briefing October 11.

Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Bamenda, Cameroon, said at an October 12 briefing that the Synod on Synodality is "a chance for the voice of Africa to be heard".

'I feel your pain' bishop tells Cameroon landslide survivors

● Archbishop Jean Mbarga of Yaoundé offered "compassion and solidarity" to the families of those affected by the October 8 landslide in the Mbankolo neighbourhood of the capital city that claimed at least 27 lives with over 50 injured in the disaster.

"We are together in this," Archbishop Mbarga said October 10 during a visit to the area.

"I feel your pain. I feel in your hearts' fear, so many unanswered questions."

"I just want to tell you not to give up. Don't give up on prayer for only God can lift you and give you the assurance that such tragedy will never happen again in this place," he said.

Several hours of rainfall on October 8 caused the collapse of a century-old dam, releasing a wall of water that swept everything on its path downstream.

Three nuns abducted from Nigerian diocese

● Prayers are being sought for the "safe release" of three Catholic nuns, a seminarian, and a driver reportedly abducted from Nigeria's Abakaliki Diocese.

In a note to *ACI Africa*, the vicar general of the Missionary Daughters of Mater Ecclesiae (MDME) in Nigeria, Sr Gloria Nnabuchi, provides the identity of the five, who were abducted on October 5.

The abductees include Sr Rosemary Ejiwokeoghene Osiowhemu, Sr Maria Ngozi Okoye of the Risen Lord, and Sr Josephine Mary Chinyekwu. The other two are seminarian Peter Eyakeno Sunday and Awoke Emmanuel.

Synod 'setting stages for future changes' on role of women

The first woman to preside over a Synod of Bishops described the experience of sitting with Pope Francis at the head table as "a gift and a grace" – and a sign of things to come in the Church.

Speaking at a press briefing today, Sr Maria de los Dolores Valencia Gomez, a Sister of St Joseph, described the participation of women in the ongoing Synod of Synodality as "setting the stage for future changes".

"I feel that this is a gradual process," said Sr Gomez, who is from Mexico. "Little by little, we shall see changes."

The October 4-29 Synod on Synodality is an assembly meant to advise Pope Francis on how the Church can more fully incorporate all of its members. The assembly includes 54 women among its 365 delegates, the first time women have ever voted in a Synod of Bishops.

Sr Gomez led the Synod on Synodality assembly on October 13 in her capacity as one of Pope Francis's 10 president-delegates. She described the experience of sitting with the Pope "as a symbol of this opening, this wish that the Church has... for something that places all of us at the same level".

Significantly, the Mexican sister's presiding role came as the synod assembly began its work on the topic of "co-responsibility in mission",



Participants of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops exchange a sign of peace during Mass in St Peter's Basilica on October 13. Photo: CNS

which includes a focus on the role of women in the Church. One of the questions under consideration during this stage of the synod is the possibility of admitting women to the diaconate.

Affirming past Church teaching, Pope Francis has repeatedly stated that the Church does not have the capacity to sacramentally ordain women. At the same time, the Pope has broken from precedent to give women governing roles in the Church, including in the Vatican.

Sr Gomez described the

involvement of women in the synod as a new *modus vivendi* for the Church, "a way of life for forever, journeying together with a permanent and ongoing dialogue".

The Mexican sister did not directly address the question of women in the diaconate during the press briefing, but another synod member did.

Abbot Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori, the head of the Cistercian Order, shared that while the synod is discussing the possibility of admitting women to the diaconate, the topic is not "dominating" the discussion.

Instead, the Cistercian said that the focus at his table has been on the deeper theme of how the Church can "recognise better the baptismal dignity of women".

Abbot Lepori said that the question of women deacons needs to be addressed "from the awareness of what the Church is and the awareness of men and women's vocations in the Church".

"The temptation is to be too superficial, in terms of slogans or groups who claim this or that," he said. "This is something I do not see at the synod."

Cardinal denounces violence against African migrants to Europe

Cardinal Cristóbal López Romero, the archbishop of Rabat, Morocco, and president of the Regional Episcopal Conference of Bishops of North Africa, denounced the violence perpetrated against migrants in various parts of Africa on their way to Europe, including enslavement.

"There are children, adolescents who have been sold up to three times," he cried.

In an October 2 interview with *ACI Prensa*, the archbishop of Rabat noted: "We see that there are more and more psychiatric problems, because the expe-

riences they go through crossing the desert are so traumatic that it's not surprising that an adolescent, a young man, even an adult is left with aftereffects."

"We are talking about robberies, violence, rape, and being sold as slaves," he said.

According to the Turkish news agency *Anadolu*, in the first half of 2023, the Moroccan authorities reported more than 25,000 attempts at illegal migration from their country to Europe.

In addition, in the last five years there have been approximately 366,000 attempts at illegal migration from the

North African country.

The National Institute of Statistics of Spain reported in August that 21,500 Moroccan immigrants had entered the country during the first half of the year, although the study does not specify whether or not they did so illegally.

Cardinal Romero pointed out that the phenomenon of migration is not a problem in itself: "The problems are war, political persecution, hunger, economic inequalities, lack of work. The effects are that people leave their country because they don't find decent living conditions there."

'Deep-seated peace' needed says Jesuit in Jerusalem

A Jesuit priest who directs an ecumenical institute in Jerusalem told *OSV News* he feels "a deep sense of compassion for what Israelis and Palestinians" are experiencing amid a war that has so far killed at least 2,300.

Fr John Paul, rector of the

Tantur Ecumenical Institute, spoke with *OSV News* October 11, four days after Hamas militants stormed from the Gaza Strip into approximately 22 locations in Israel, gunning down civilians and taking some 100-150 hostages, including infants, the elderly

and persons with disabilities.

The institute's students and staff sheltered for hours on the first day of the attack, with most students leaving the institute.

However, Tantur's largely Palestinian and Israeli staff are equally traumatised, said

Fr Paul.

"Violence only perpetuates more violence," he said. "War traumatises everybody. And war only deepens fear. It deepens suspicions. It deepens hatred."

Fr Paul said he is looking for "a deep-seated peace".

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Pray for a meaningful peace process in the Holy Land

Dear Editor, I am deeply saddened by the recent escalations of violence in the Holy Land. The world witnessed the tragic events that unfolded, Hamas launching a terrorist attack on Israel, and Israel's large-scale military action in Gaza. These events have brought immense suffering and loss to both sides – we must implore for peace.

It was great to hear the news

that the more than 50 Irish pilgrims arrived home safely on Thursday, it must have been quite scary.

We must be peacemakers in a world marred by conflict and violence. As we reflect on the Holy Land, we remember the sacredness of the region, cherished by three great monotheistic religions. It is a place of deep spiritual significance and heritage for countless people

around the world. The violence we see there wounds not only the people involved but also the soul of humanity.

We mourn the loss of innocent lives on both sides and pray for the wounded and those who grieve. Pope Francis has consistently called for an end to violence and a renewed commitment to peaceful coexistence.

We also call on political leaders, both in the region and on the global stage, to prioritise diplomatic efforts and dialogue over military actions. The cycle of violence will never bring lasting peace, but negotiation and understanding can pave the way for a more secure and prosperous future for all.

Let us pray for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the

beginning of a meaningful peace process. May the leaders of the world work together to ensure the safety and well-being of all people in the region, and may God grant them the wisdom and strength to achieve this noble goal.

Yours etc.,
Patrick Grady
Crumlin, Dublin 12

Looking through eyes of Book of Revelation

Dear Editor, It is helpful to read current world events through the eyes of the author of the Book of Revelation.

It gives one an understanding, on another level, of what is taking place.

Yours etc.,
Judith Leonard
Raheny, Dublin 5



Govt donation to abortion provider a 'shocking waste'

Dear Editor, I must say I was shocked to read that our Government made a donation of €300,000 to the abortion provider International Planned Parenthood last year and that a donation was also made to the Clinton Foundation [*The Irish Catholic* – October 5, 2023]. Who authorised these payments? What debate took place before these payments were made? I have written to An Tánaiste, Micheál Martin, asking who authorised these donations. Isn't the Irish Family Planning Association affiliated to IPP and already funded by the Government? Some time ago I asked why the IFPA was regarded as a 'charity' and the reply was that "it was decided to do so".

This shocking waste of money on the destruction of unborn babies contrasts sharply with the Government's lack of any support whatsoever for those with crises pregnancies.

The silence is deafening on our abortion legislation and this is totally unacceptable. For evil to triumph it just takes good people to do nothing. We must stand up and be counted on this vital issue. Of course, that is what the abortion supporters do not want and they have now gone to the extreme of pushing for a law to prevent abortion even being noticed. Our supine Government is seemingly going to provide this, despite the Garda Commissioner stating that there were sufficient laws in place to prevent obstruction.

How sad it is that we have not sufficient gardai to police our streets but some are to be deployed to prevent peaceful protest. Likewise our health service is a shambles but there will be no delays with abortions. How has a once compassionate nation with respect for life come to this?

Please let us do all we can to support all life from conception until natural death. Let us be a voice for the voiceless, including those who may be concerned about euthanasia. How can we possibly consider this when our suicide rate is tragically so high?

Yours etc.,
Mary Stewart
Ardeskin, Donegal Town

Concerned parents protesting at schools

Dear Editor, I write regarding recent reports in various media outlets condemning concerned parents for making contact with other parents outside schools and handing out leaflets alerting them to the dangers of the 'Standard for Sexuality Education in Europe' programme for primary schools being pushed by the WHO (World Health Organisation), a document

easily accessible on the internet but hidden from parents.

When out canvassing recently for the 2024 elections I have shown this WHO document to many parents who were horrified by its contents and delighted to have it brought to their attention except one mother who saw it as progressiveness. How she sees teaching primary

school students aged 5 of, amongst other things, the "pleasures of early childhood masturbation" and that they have a right to explore different gender identities as progressive is beyond me.

This document clearly disregards objective truth and undermines parents' rights to instruct and educate their children.

Parents have also com-

plained about individuals who tried to hand them leaflets outside school gates while they were collecting their children. Rather than complaining and burying their heads in the sand, these parents need to cop themselves on and inform themselves properly.

Yours etc.,
Chris Carr
Midleton, Co. Cork.

Vast areas targeted by exclusion zone bill

Dear Editor, Many people around the country are possibly unaware of the draconian bill that passed through second stage in the Dáil on Wednesday, September 27 last. Shockingly, the exclusion zone bill was passed by 111-10 TDs. The high number in favour partly reflects the fact that, unlike Bríd Smith's recent abortion bill, where the numbers were much closer, the party whip was unfairly imposed by the major political parties, thus removing freedom of conscience.

As many TDs know, this drastic bill is completely unnecessary: the Garda Commissioner Drew Harris stated long ago that any such protests are already covered under existing leg-

islation. And there are no reports of unruly protests on this issue, the numbers involved being tiny. Wor- ryingly, what this bill does however, is target one particular group in Irish society (which incidentally makes up almost 34% of the electorate, based on the 2018 referendum).

Most people probably think that the exclusion zones in question would be limited to the entrances of our maternity hospitals but not so. In actual fact, huge areas of our towns and cities would be covered by this censorship ban since exclusion zones of 100 metres are being proposed around every GP surgery, family planning centre, hospital, clinic or other location where

abortions might take place. In effect, this would make it illegal within vast areas for pro-life people to respectfully express their views, for example at a rally, march or indeed even to distribute leaflets about life-affirming alternatives to termination.

What is happening in Ireland to freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the right to peaceful protest? Surely these are among the hallmarks of a modern democracy? It is to be hoped that at Committee Stage, reason will prevail, no party whip will be imposed and this highly discriminatory bill will be defeated.

Yours etc.,
Sinéad Boland
Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow.

Letters to the Editor

All letters should include the writer's full name, postal address and telephone numbers (day and evening). Letter writers may receive a subsequent telephone call from *The Irish Catholic* as part of our authentication process which does not amount to a commitment to publish.

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication date, acknowledge unpublished letters or discuss the

merits of letters. We do not publish pseudonyms or other formulae to conceal the writer's identity, such as "name and address with editor". We do not print letters addressed to someone else, open letters, or verse. Letters to the Editor should only be sent to *The Irish Catholic*, and not other publications. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be shortened for space requirements.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, October 19, 2023

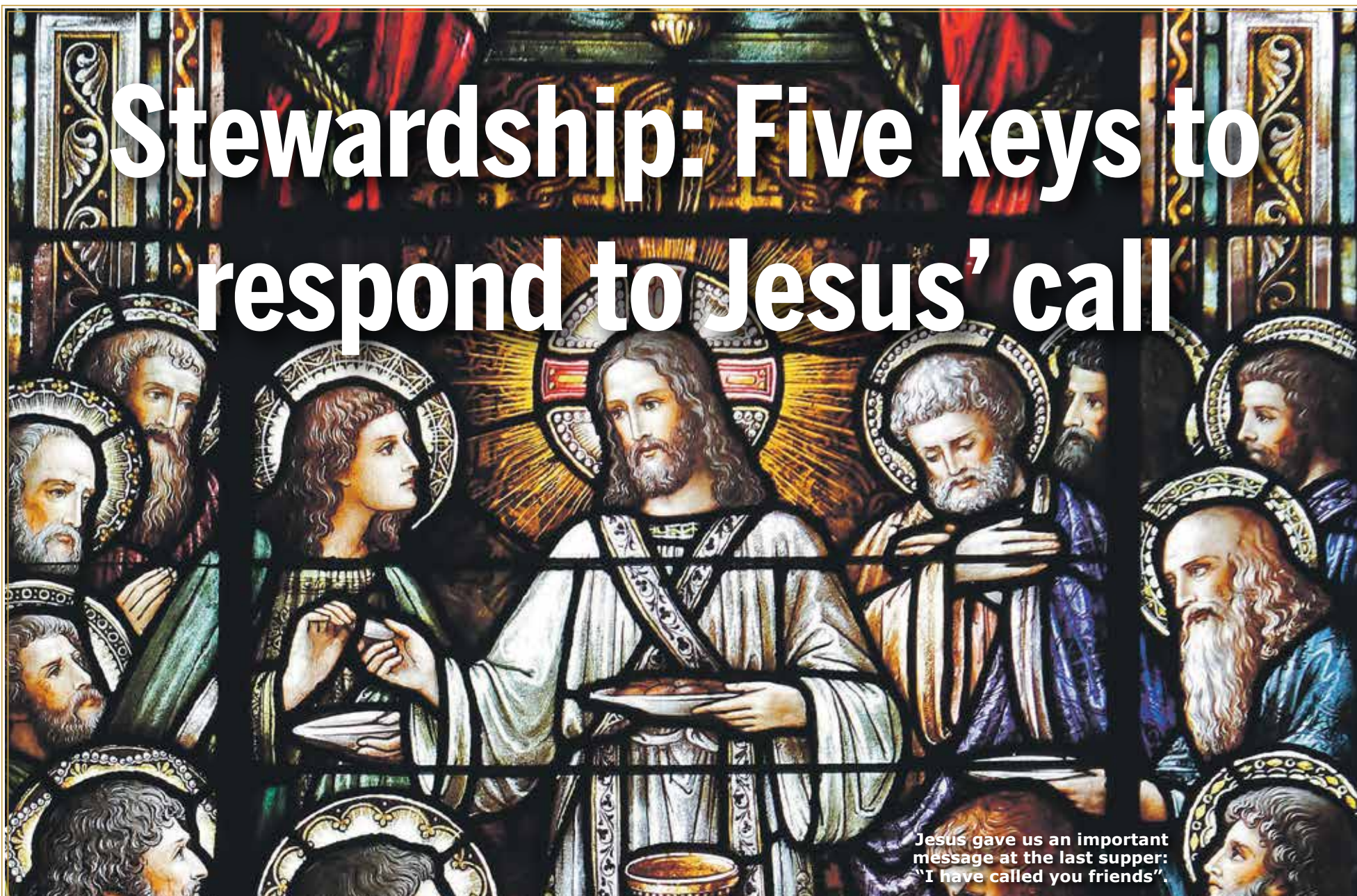
Faith in film

How an artist responds to senseless violence

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Stewardship: Five keys to respond to Jesus' call



Jesus gave us an important message at the last supper: "I have called you friends".

What is 'stewardship'? Stewardship is perhaps one of the most misunderstood words in the Church today. Some people think it is all about money. Others think it means only time, talent and treasure. Some wonder if it is just another word for fundraising or tithing.

In reality, 'stewardship' is the word that describes our entire relationship with God. God loved and trusted us so much that he made us his stewards. Our challenge is to strive to be good stewards by recognising that everything we have is a gift from God, taking time to be grateful for the gifts that God has given us, realising that God gives each of us all we



Stewardship describes our whole relationship with God, writes Susan M. Erschen

need plus enough to share, and turning to the Holy Spirit for guidance in sharing our gifts as God intended.

Stewardship, therefore, is linked to our life of following Jesus.

"Once one chooses to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option," the bishops state in their pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, first published in 1992.

Anyone who wants to be good at any task must study it and practice it. Stewardship, too, takes practice. Society tempts us to triumph in our material accomplishments and continually strive for more. At times resisting this pull toward self-centred materialism requires practice, prayer and careful study of God's teachings.

At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ gave us important final

messages: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: Love one another" (Jn 15:15-17).

This simple message from Our Lord gives us five keys for living as good stewards: spend time with God, realise God has chosen you, contribute something for God, trust in God's abundance, and love and serve.

1. Spend time with God: God is the owner and master

of everything. Yet, we are not his slaves. We are the stewards he trusts, the ones he invites to know him and his will.

Stewardship draws us closer to God. When we embrace the role of steward, we open ourselves to know God more fully.

We foster that relationship by attending Mass more frequently; weaving more prayer into and throughout our busy days; finding time to study Scripture and religious books, articles or websites; participating in faith-enrichment activities in our parish; and stopping into a church or chapel for quiet time alone with God.

2. Realise God has chosen us: How awesome it is to realise God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, has chosen us. Every-



Stewardship means contributing something of our talents, be they singing, serving, speaking and more, to God. Photo: OSV News

thing we are, everything we do and everything we have is a result of God choosing us, loving us and blessing us.

Gifts

God chooses each one of us to be the stewards of different gifts. We may have a musical talent, financial aptitude, a generous spirit or a positive attitude. Even our faith is a gift from God. God does not give us all the same gifts. We could look around and see people who have more gifts than we have and become jealous. Or, we could look around the world and see people who have much less than we have, and learn to be compassionate. The choice is ours.

3. Contribute something for God: Based on the unique combination of gifts God has given us, each of us is called to make a contribution that is uniquely ours to make. We can contribute in a variety of ways by providing a helping hand or a strong back; leadership, knowledge or wisdom; financial support; a listening ear or a gentle smile; a new idea; and special skills or talents.

Only we, through prayer, know what God is calling

us to contribute.

4. Trust in God's abundance: It can be difficult for any of us to give away something that we think we need. However, stewardship teaches us to look at our financial situations in a new way. When we believe our own needs will be met, it is easy for us to give.

Unfortunately, the endless advertising so prevalent in today's media convinces us we have endless needs. However, the things the world tempts us to have are not needs. They are wants.

God may not give us all we want, but we must trust that he will give us what we need, when we ask. In turn, we generously share with the world what God has entrusted to us.

5. Love and Serve: When we share our resources more generously with the parish, we take the focus off the parish's financial burdens. In this way, stewardship encourages ministry and a more loving parish community.

When we love and serve others in our parish, we build up a community that will also love and serve us. We become part of something greater than

ourselves. We feel a sense of belonging.

Compassion

We also develop a sense of compassion when we reach out to those who are most in need. Belonging and compassion are two of the many unexpected benefits of living as God's stewards.

Stewardship is not a gift we give to God, but rather a gift God gives to us.

From the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ, Catholics made the work of the Church, Christ's body, a priority in their lives.

The great cathedrals and simple country churches where people worship, schools where countless children are educated, hospitals that care for the sick, and charitable institutions that serve the needs of many, have been built by generations of the faithful.

They gave, even when they had little to give, because they knew Jesus had called them as his disciples to be good stewards of the resources God entrusted to them.

i Susan M Erschen served for 12 years as the director of stewardship education for the Archdiocese of St Louis.



We foster our relationship with God by giving time to him in prayer.

The rosary is a mighty tool for evangelisation



SueAnn Howell

‘Unleash the Power of the Rosary’, a panel discussion hosted by Paradisus Dei and the Dominican friars of the Province of St Joseph, offered a lively discussion about the rosary as a powerful tool for evangelisation that connects people to Jesus through Mary and guides them on a journey to the centre of Jesus’ Sacred Heart.

“Every time we pray the rosary with the heart of Our Lady we are contemplating the face of Christ,” said panellist Sr Alexia Maria, a member of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary. “As we pray the rosary we are really living (the) life of Christ and we are entering deeply into each mystery.”

The virtual panel discussion was offered by the Dominican friars, who sponsored the September 30 Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage, and Paradisus Dei, a Catholic apostolate that supports marriage and family life, which is about to release the second season of a video series about the rosary.

Michael Gormley, a mission evangelist for Paradisus Dei and successful podcaster, led the hourlong conversation between Sr Alexia Maria and Dominican friars Fr John Paul Kern and Fr Aquinas Guilbeau.

Devotion

During the discussion, Sr Alexia Maria, who shared her moving testimony about the rosary in the newest instalment of Paradisus Dei’s “Mysteries of the Rosary: The Joyful Mysteries”, spoke of her community’s Marian charism and daily devotion to the rosary.

“We are called to be the living presence of Our Lady in the heart of the Church,” Sr Alexia explained. “It’s a joy to be a part of the ‘Mysteries of the Rosary’,” especially “The Joyful Mysteries”, as in a sense, like Our Lady, I can sing my own Magnificat and share what the Lord has done in my own life.”

She noted that she and



A man kisses a rosary as he prays before Mass at a church in Beijing. Photo: CNS.

the members of her religious community wear a rosary as part of their religious habits. At their home in Miami, they pray a daily rosary together and daily contemplate an image of Our Lady for 15 minutes. Additionally, each sister is given one specific mystery of the rosary to contemplate daily for the rest of their lives.

Sr Alexia Maria received the fifth glorious mystery, the crowning of Mary, which she said was “a joy”.

“The rosary has been prayed in times of trial, distress and joy. Battles have been won, hearts have been converted and prayers have been answered”

“All I truly want to be is a

star in the crown of Our Lady, and I have always understood that, and so when I received that mystery it was a great gift and also a great task,” Sr Alexia Maria said.

The rosary is a devotion of memorised prayers used to reflect on one of four sets of ‘mysteries’ – specific events in the life of Jesus – known as the joyful mysteries, the luminous mysteries, the sorrowful mysteries and the glorious mysteries.

The rosary has been prayed in times of trial, distress and joy. Battles have been won, hearts have been converted and prayers have been answered, with millions of people around the world using this spiritual tool to pray to Jesus and seek Mary’s intercession for matters great and small.

The church dedicates the month of October to the rosary. The feast of Our Lady of the Rosary was on October 7, commemorating

the rosary’s role in the Holy League’s defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the 1571 Battle of Lepanto, a pivotal naval engagement off the coast of southwestern Greece.

According to tradition, Mary gave the rosary to St Dominic (1170–1221), the founder of the Order of Preachers, commonly known as the Dominicans, to help him fight a heresy prevalent in southern France that viewed the world as a cosmic battle between good spiritual forces and evil material forces, and understood the human person to be a spirit trapped in a material body.

Charism

Fr Guilbeau, university chaplain and director of campus ministry at The Catholic University of America in Washington, said the Dominican order’s devotion to Mary and the rosary is foundational to its charism.

“The Order of Preachers

has had the privilege from our very beginning, with St Dominic himself being dedicated to Our Lady,” Fr Guilbeau said. “Our Lady shows up prominently in the life of St Dominic in terms of his inspiration of the order, but also is seen in the first generation of preachers. ... The dedication to Our Lady and fidelity to Our Lady shape the very soul of our Dominican order, and we preach devotion to the rosary as part of our observance of our religious life.”

Fr Kern, who is the executive director of the Dominican Friars Foundation in New York City as well as the director of the Rosary Shrine of St Jude in Washington, lives across the street from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, where he helped lead the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage that took place there September 30. He spoke of Mary’s desire

to intercede for the Faithful.

“She is going to lead us to Jesus; intercede on our behalf for him to give us the things that only he can give that we need. Then her final instruction, ‘Do whatever he tells you,’ is good, motherly instruction,” he said, referring to Mary’s words to the servants during the wedding at Cana about Jesus, recorded in John 2:5.

“Nobody wants you to love and know Jesus more than Mary,” Fr Kern said. “She draws you right to her son. So be not afraid.”

Fr Guilbeau added: “As Christians praying the rosary, we want to imitate her, see what she sees, think what she thinks, feel what she feels. Everything the rosary offers us has that as its goal – to know God, to worship God.”

i SueAnn Howell writes for OSV News from North Carolina.

How an artist responds to senseless violence

Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

The *Pianist*, about a Polish Jew's experience of WWII, was a bit of a passion project for its Polish-Jewish director, Roman Polanski. Since coming out in 2002, it has been hailed as a classic.

It stars Adrien Brody as pianist and composer Władysław Szpilman, a real-life Holocaust survivor who wrote a memoir also called *The Pianist*. And survivor is a word that doesn't really do justice to his experience, as the film relates.

I had always been put off the film by the subject matter, which is very hard to dramatise without becoming sentimental or too gruesome. But Mr Polanski casts an ice cool gaze over the story.

In Adrien Brody he has an ideal conduit. He blew me away with his performance, so often silent and entirely solitary. He plays a character who is regularly stripped of anything that we might call 'life', left with the merest essentials for survival.

For instance, there are two occasions where by virtue of the kindness of non-Jews, he conceals himself in abandoned apartments, without any other human contact except irregular deliveries of food.

All he can do is observe his own small corner of the world, one

which happens to be full of activity all the same. He witnesses the Polish Jews rising from their Warsaw ghetto, only to be crushed mercilessly by the Nazi's. He witnesses the Warsaw uprising against the Nazi's and their brutal retaliation, all from his solitary apartment.

Having given you this impressionistic account, let me outline the story in more detail. When war arrives in 1939, Szpilman and his family are well to do Jews. Szpilman is a renowned pianist, whose final performance before the war is interrupted by massive explosions.

Abuse

The situation for Jews in Warsaw deteriorates quickly. All Jews were internally exiled to the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, subjected to random acts of violence and murder, as well as the most dehumanising kinds of abuse by the Nazi soldiers.

Then they were shipped off to the concentration camps. Szpilman just about escapes this fate due to the actions of a sympathetic guard – but his family are not so lucky.

Having escaped, he has to live by his wits, good fortune and the occasional kindness of fellow Poles and even a Nazi soldier. This makes up the second half of the film.

What makes *The Pianist* stand out from the main body of war films is down largely to Mr Brody's performance. He goes through quite a physical transformation, losing a lot of weight to be more convincing as this starving Jewish fugitive. His fellow cast members don't do a bad job either, it has to be said, although I never really warmed to any of them as characters.

Then there is the remarkable story, how he happened to be in these key locations at these times,

and in the way that he was. The film begins with the everyday bickering of a middle class family, arguing over where to hide their money, and shifts quickly and seamlessly from one event to the next.

Mr Polanski wanted to remain as true as possible to the real Szpilman's experiences, and he manages to integrate the random shifts in environment and company well.

There is something arbitrary to story, and that's how it was. Szpilman's life could have followed those of hundreds of thousands of Jews, to the mass graves, and that he doesn't is as much down to fortune as anything else.

“Thank God, not me. He wants us to survive. Well, that's what we have to believe”

This was quite a personal film for Mr Polanski, who himself survived the ghetto while his mother didn't. This comes through, but not in any conventional way. This isn't a film that has what most would consider authentic, that is to say, it isn't invested with a vast amount of sentimentality or emotion.

That surprised me, but it seems to be Mr Polanski's style. He is an observer of events, always regarding them at a distance with his cool gaze. It allows him to integrate what is quite a disparate story so well.

Survival

And perhaps also that explains the way in which his experiences do come through. This detached observation is his response to wanton brutality, to the seemingly arbitrary balance between life and death, between his survival and his mother's death.

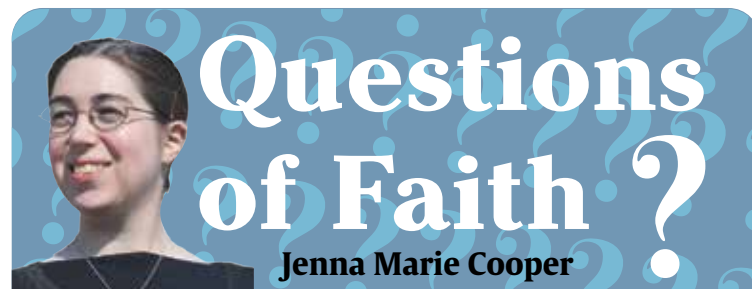
I think it's both a strength and a weakness of the film. I was never quite invested emotionally, although I was impressed by his skill – he did come close to moving me with one scene though, when all of a sudden the pianist is given his chance to play again, in the unlikely surroundings of a bombed out house with a German officer for his audience.

It is the same German who helps him, united by their love of music. When Szpilman tries to thank him, the German comments, “Thank God, not me. He wants us to survive. Well, that's what we have to believe”.

While this is an equivocal statement, it does hint at the film's main theme which is quite simply, why? And it is a question which ultimately Polanski doesn't seek to answer – he is the observer.



Adrien Brody stars as Władysław Szpilman in *The Pianist*.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



Q: I have a question on discernment of private revelations. I don't mean big ones like Medjugorje, etc., but individuals who say they 'have had a word from the Lord'. Couldn't this be just their own opinion interpreted as God talking?

A: Yes, this is a concern. With these kinds of more personal private revelations, we always need to be aware of the possibility that a person could be mistaking their own opinion for God's will. The Church never expects us to take such revelations uncritically and at face value.

Even the 'big' approved private revelations such as Our Lady of Lourdes and Fatima are never obligatory for the Faithful to believe in, despite being a recognised part of the life of the Church to the point of having feast days on the general liturgical calendar.

After very careful objective investigations, the Church only ever acknowledges them as “worthy of belief” – ie., that we may believe in and follow them, not that we have to.

Because very personal supposed private revelations like the one you mentioned do not go through any formal approval process, it's important to regard them with a healthy scepticism.

A technical term for such revelations, where a person has an interior sense of words coming to them, is 'locutions'. Locutions are considered extraordinary phenomena. As such, they are not necessary to our life of faith – unlike the essentials of prayer, catechesis, growth in virtue and the sacraments.

In fact, St John of the Cross, a doctor of the Church and one of our foremost authorities on the theology of the spiritual life, goes so far as to counsel those who think they are receiving locutions to basically ignore them!

In his work *The Ascent of Mt Carmel*, he goes so far as to note that on judgment day, God will call to task many of those who received (or thought they were receiving) locutions, because they neglected their actual obligations and duties of their state

in life.

If a person believes they are receiving private revelations, they should be mindful of the possibility that they may be misinterpreting their own interior experience on the one hand; or, on the other, of the danger of becoming prideful or letting their presumed locutions distract them from the normal responsibilities of a faithful Christian.

It's important for that person to bring up their perceived revelations in an honest and open way with a confessor or qualified spiritual director.

And any spiritual experience that leads someone to commit a sin, or to disobey legitimate authority in the Church, or believe something contrary to the Church's teachings, should automatically be rejected as a false revelation.

That all being said, we as Catholics do believe that God can and does communicate his particular will for us in the unique circumstances of our lives, whether this means discerning our vocation or state in life or discerning how to apply the teachings of the Gospel in specific concrete situations.

Another great spiritual master, St Ignatius of Loyola (most famous as the founder of the Jesuits), wrote extensively on the process of discerning God's will.

St Ignatius acknowledges the possibility that God might, in rare situations, make his will known in extraordinary ways, such as through locutions and visions.

But it's far more common that God will communicate with us in subtle ways and in the context of a regular and devoted prayer life. Namely, when we are striving for holiness and make a point to be open to God in prayer, we will know something is of God by the sense of peace we feel; and we will likewise know that something is not God's will for us when it induces a sense of anxiety.

i Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.

A subtler kind of poverty



There are different ways of being excluded in life. Earlier this year, one of my older brothers died. By every indication he had lived an exemplary life, one lived mainly for others. He died much loved by everyone who knew him. His was a life lived for family, Church, community and friends.

Giving the homily at his funeral, I shared that, while he almost always brought a smile, a graciousness, and some wit to every situation, underneath he sometimes had to swallow hard to always do that. Why? Because, even though through his entire adult life he gave himself to serving others, for much of his life he didn't have much choice in the matter. Here's his story.

Brother's story

He was one of the older children in our family, a large second-generation immigrant family, struggling with poverty in an isolated rural area of the Canadian prairies where educational facilities weren't easily available at that time. So, for him, as for many of his contemporaries, both men and women, the normal expectation was that after elementary school (an eighth-grade education) you would end your school days and begin to work to support your family. Indeed, when he graduated from elementary school, there was no local high school for him to go to.

Making this more unfortunate, he was perhaps the brightest, most gifted mind in our family. It's not that he didn't want to continue his formal education. But, he had to do



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

what most others of his age did at that time, leave school and begin working, giving your entire salary over every month to support your family. He did this with good cheer, knowing this was expected of him.

Through the years, from age 16 when he first entered the work force until he took over the family farm in his mid-30s, he worked for farmers, worked in construction, and did everything from operating a backhoe to driving a truck. Moreover, when our parents died and he took over our farm, there were a number of years when he was still pressured to use

the farm to support the family. By the time he was finally freed of this responsibility, it was too late (not radically, but existentially) for him to restart his formal education.

He lived out his final years before retirement as a farmer, though as one who found his energy elsewhere, in involvement in ongoing education and lay ministries programmes where he thrived emotionally and intellectually. Part of his sacrifice too was that he never married, not because he was a temperamental bachelor, but because the same things that bound him to duty also,

existentially, never afforded him the opportunity to marry.

After I shared his story at his funeral, I was approached by several people who said: That's also my brother! That's also my sister! That was my dad! That was my mother.

Having grown up where this was true of a number of my older siblings, today, whenever I see people working in service jobs such as cooking in cafeterias, cleaning houses, mowing lawns, working in construction, doing janitorial work, and other work of this kind, I am often left to wonder, are they like my brother? Did they get to choose this work or are they doing it because of circumstances? Did this person want to be a doctor, or writer, a teacher, an entrepreneur, or a CEO of some company, and end up having to take this job because of an economic or other circumstance?

Dignity

Don't get me wrong. There's nothing demeaning or less-than-noble in these jobs. Indeed, working with your hands is perhaps the most honest work of all – unlike my own work within the academic community where it can be easy to be self-serving and mostly irrelevant. There's a wonderful dignity in working with your hands, as there was for my brother. However, the importance and dignity of that work notwithstanding, the happiness of the person doing it is sometimes predicated on whether or not he or she had a choice, that is, whether or not he or she is there by choice or because factors ranging from the economic situation of their family, to their immigrant status, to lack of opportunity, have forced them there.

As I walk past these folks in my day-to-day life and work, I try to notice them and appreciate the service they are rendering for the rest of us. And sometimes I say to myself: This could be my brother. This could be my sister. This could be the brightest mind of all who was not given the opportunity to become a doctor, a writer, nurse, a teacher or a social worker.

If in the next life, as Jesus promised, there's to be a reversal where the last shall be first, I hope these people, like my brother, who were deprived of some of the opportunities that the rest of us enjoyed, will read my heart with an empathy that surpasses my understanding of them during their lifetime.

“Part of his sacrifice too was that he never married, not because he was a temperamental bachelor, but because the same things that bound him to duty also, existentially, never afforded him the opportunity to marry.”

Give your heart and soul to God



Photo: OSV News

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
 Is 45:1, 4-6
 Ps 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10
 1 Thes 1:1-5b
 Mt 22:15-21

“I am the Lord, there is no other,” the prophet Isaiah tells us in simple, evocative words. God’s power is universal, loving, and mysterious. And all earthly power comes from God, as Isaiah reminds the Israelites.

To confess God’s power has profound meaning for our personal life. For when we trust that God is the source of all power, we place ourselves in the merciful hands of God, with confident faith and

The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



humble thanksgiving.

It is this Christian attitude of thanksgiving and deep trust in God that Paul praises in today’s second reading.

The apostle describes the Thessalonians as an early Christian community whose faith, hope and love of Jesus Christ radiated from their words and actions.

Discipleship

This was the path of Christian discipleship then and it remains the essence

of every follower of Jesus today.

The challenge of today’s Gospel lies in finding the balance between being disciples of Jesus Christ and being good citizens of society and the world.

Jesus offers the religious leaders of his day an answer to this perennial task by answering their question with a question.

He asks them to produce a coin used to pay taxes and asks them to describe the coin: “Whose head is this and whose inscription is on it?”

Then Jesus tells them that the coin that bears the image and name of Caesar should be given to Caesar.

With that he reminds them of their religious obligations to “Give to God

what belongs to God”.

Jesus confronts them, and us, with a fundamental question. Do we give to God what rightfully belongs to our creator who is the all-powerful origin of the universe – the gift of our entire heart, mind and soul?

The religious leaders of Jesus’ time set up the question in such a way that one had to choose between loyalty to political power or faithfulness to God.

Dilemma

They create an either/or situation, a false dilemma between choosing to pay taxes, as good citizens would do, and serving God with one’s words and actions.

Jesus’ answer cuts

right through their false dilemma to show that the Christian life is not an either/or situation.

A disciple of Jesus strives to be both a law abiding citizen and a person of faith who loves God and neighbour. We do so, confident that serving God is our highest priority.

Christian faith requires that we are good citizens, for Christians live in this world, but not of it.

Followers of Jesus are often faced with difficult decisions. There are so many ‘Caesars’ competing for our allegiance.

As we give to ‘Caesar’, God’s word reminds us to not waver in our faithfulness to God in word and deed.

May we never stop giving to God what belongs to

God who is the origin and end, the meaning and purpose of existence.

Strength

As we ponder God’s word today, we learn to trust in the strength that comes from God to persevere as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ as we pray, “speak to me, Lord”.

Question: How does the challenge of Jesus to be a good citizen and a good disciple speak to you today?

i Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of Catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Hidden heroes helping those in peril on the mountains

In such fractious times it's reassuring to find a programme that accentuates the positive, and you'll frequently find that on TG4.

Tarrtháilte na hÉireann (TG4, Thursdays) is a new series highlighting the work of the rescue services. Last week's episode featured the work of mountain rescue teams, with a particular focus on Reek Sunday in late July when thousands of pilgrims travel to Croagh Patrick in Co. Mayo and make the 7km climb over difficult terrain, often in their bare feet. Penitential or what! The circumstances call for the presence of Mayo Mountain Rescue, along with support teams from the surrounding area.

The first half of the programme outlined the tough training undergone by the rescuers – working in a voluntary capacity, which makes their efforts all the more inspiring. Since Covid-19 more people have been heading for the mountains, and the number of emergency callouts has increased, often because people don't dress appropriately, either for terrain or temperature. Temperatures drop considerably as you climb higher and one rescuer said that as they drop, the brain goes cold and people make “silly decisions”. I think there must be lots of cold brains around and



Young people atop Croagh Patrick.

not just in the mountains.

It was fascinating to watch the training of rescue dogs – they work hard for the reward of a tennis ball! Unfortunately, the work they do often involves the discovery of fatalities. Of the 408 incidents in 2021, 21 ended in death. Fortunately, on that Reek Sunday covered in the second half of the show, we heard of just one casualty – and it seemed more a case of mild sunstroke than anything life-threatening. The woman in question was apologetic, but was treated with care and

gentleness. One of the rescuers said he respected the determination of the pilgrims.

Also fascinating were the statistics produced on **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) about the voting records of the 26 Church of England bishops in the House of Lords. A Conservative MP, Chris Loder, had accused the bishops of political bias, and there had been calls for the bishops to “stay in lane”, away from politics. We heard a recording of Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby criticising a bill relating to illegal

immigration. Journalist Helen Grady provided some background – since 2017 around 96% of the bishops' votes had been against the Government. Since 1999 they had voted 59% of the time against Labour governments, 78% of the time against a Tory/LibDem government and 88% of the time against recent Conservative governments. So, presenter Edward Stourton mischievously concluded “The Lords spiritual are lefties”. Helen Read thought it wasn't so simple – only five or six were ever present and only a couple vote in any division, so maybe it's just those who turn up are left-leaning. Of course, we don't have such a structural connection between Church and state in the Republic, but there's something to be said for dissenting political voices, and for a second chamber to scrutinise government legislation.

Considerably short of fascinating was **The Last Word** (Today FM, Friday) discussing the shortage of priests to do funerals and the prospect of lay ministers officiating. In the ‘Week Trending’ review slot, the lack of religious literacy cast a long shadow. There was so much muddling and jumbling up of Sacrament, sacrifice, ritual, funeral and ordination. There was near consensus that this would be

PICK OF THE WEEK

BLIAIN DE THITHÍOCHT - GÉARCHÉIM GAN DEIREADH

TG4 Wednesday October 25, 9.30pm

Ireland was born in a housing crisis. And it has never gone away. Every government and generation, has had to contend with this same issue.

ATHBHEATHA: COLM CILLE ILDÁNACH

TG4 Friday October 27, 7.30pm

As part of its multi-faceted commemoration of the 1500th anniversary of St Colmcille's birth, the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) has commissioned seven new artworks.

A RING AND A PRAYER

RTÉ One Friday October 27, 8pm

Documentary series on multicultural marriage, exploring diverse cultures, values, religious faith and romance in a fun way that will engage audiences of all faiths and none.

a problem mostly for the older generation. Ben Finnegan, a *Today FM* newsreader, wondered if the Church would be in this “predicament” if they had married and women priests, and criticised the Association of Catholic Priests for “fear-mongering” in bringing this up. Sarah McGuinness noted that the “priest fleet” was declining and said that was “unfortunate”. Presenter Matt Cooper was critical of the generic “single transferable speech” made by priests at funerals, when they didn't seem to actually know the deceased.

On the previous Monday's **Liveline** (RTÉ Radio One) the

subject of ‘priestless funerals’ (i.e. without Mass) also arose. Fr Joe McDonald stressed he wasn't speaking on behalf of the Association of Catholic Priests and wasn't a member – presenter Katie Hannon had thought he was. He did a much better job than **The Last Word** of explaining the situation, outlining the challenge posed by the decline in vocations, and for example providing clarity on what sacraments laypeople could and couldn't celebrate – quoting one of his professors, he said deacons could “hatch, match and dispatch”!



Pat O'Kelly

Music

A feast for Irish opera lovers

October means only one thing for Irish opera lovers – the Wexford Festival founded in 1951 by local GP and opera enthusiast, Dr Tom Walsh. His idea was the revival of operas that had disappeared from the repertoire and injecting them with new life. While this policy continues, Wexford also produces relatively recent compositions.

This year brings an early Donizetti piece – *Zoraida di Granata* – then moves into the last century for Camille Erlanger's *L'aubre rouge* and concludes with Italian-born Marco Tutino's *La Ciociara*. Each opera has four performances.

Donizetti has been a continuous Wexford



Portrait of Gaetano Donizetti by Francesco Coghetti

favourite since *L'elisir d'amore* was heard there in 1952 and his *Don Pasquale* enjoys the distinction of having festival productions in 1953 and 1963. The promotional blurb for

this year's extravaganza describes the operatic triplets as *Women at War*.

The festival opens on October 24 with the Donizetti that dates from the early 1820s. Its première was not without its difficulties following the death of its principal tenor during rehearsals forcing Donizetti to rewrite his part for a contralto.

However, *Zoraida* was well received at the Teatro Argentina in Rome in 1822 with the pamphlet *Notizie del giorno* commenting, “A new and very happy hope is rising for the Italian musical theatre. The young Maestro Gaetano Donizetti has launched himself strongly in his truly

serious opera, *Zoraida*. The applause was unanimous, sincere and universal”.

Born in Paris, Camille Erlanger (1863-1919) studied at the Conservatoire there under the guidance of Léo Delibes and Jules Massenet. Erlanger won the coveted Prix de Rome in 1888 for his cantata *Velléda* and left a legacy of nine operas with the second – *Aphrodite* – remaining popular at the Opéra-Comique until the mid 1930s.

His *L'aubre rouge* (The Red Dawn), opening in Wexford on October 25, had its first performance in Rouen in late December 1911. While the composer and his operas are now

almost forgotten in Europe his memory continues to be honoured in Quebec City by the Avenue Erlanger named after him.

A graduate of Milan's conservatory where he studied flute and composition, Marco Tutino (b. 1954) has a broad range of works to his credit, not least the ballet *Richard III*, the musical comedy *Puss in Boots* and a Kyrie and Agnus Dei written for the Jubilee celebrations at the Vatican in August 2000.

Opening in Wexford on October 26, Tutino's *La Ciociara* (Two women) had its first performance in San Francisco in June 2015. Adapted from a novel by Italian Alberto Moravia

(1907-1990), the opera deals with the cruelty of war, the loss of innocence and the intense love of a mother – a strong willed widow – for her daughter as they flee from Rome in 1945.

Staying in operatic mould, Humperdinck's charming *Hansel and Gretel* comes to the National Concert Hall on October 21 and 22 in a fully staged production by Vivian Coates for Lyric Opera.

Under conductor Toby Purser, the cast includes Sarah Richmond and Eimear Harper in the title roles with Carolyn Holt as Mother; Don d'Souza as Father and Rhonde Browne as the scheming Witch.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The daily perils of Christians in the Faith's ancient homelands

The Vanishing: The Twilight of Christianity in the Middle East, by Janine di Giovanni (Bloomsbury, £10.99 /€12.99)

Peter Costello

The author of this most moving book, now a senior Fellow and professor at Yale's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, has been described "as one of our generation's finest correspondents". This book alone illustrates her skill, insight and compassion.

According to Salman Rushdie the book is "A tragic portrait of a disappearing world, created with passion and literary grace".

The countries of this wide region are often called "Muslim countries", but this is to quite obscure for those whose notion of Christianity as a 'European' religion is too strong, that Christianity arose and spread and for centuries flourished in this region, that historically speaking if one takes a long enough view they are the original Christian countries.

Hence efforts to remove all traces of Christianity in these regions, in which it was (as the classical Greeks would have said) "earth born", and not the result of missionary work by colonial powers.

The territories she interrogates are Iraq, Syria, Egypt and significantly Gaza, which on the weekend I write has burst into a cataclysmic war, a war which seems to have no intended aim except to create chaos and so inevitably to extend for another generation the terrible straitened circumstances in which people already live.

Distance

Reporters often seem to act at a distance from events, concentrating on what will affect their audiences, seeking experiences from ordinary people who luckily speak English, though these may not in all contexts be the most correct or truthful insight that might have been found. But the conversations she reports with Christians in these states have everywhere the ring of truth.

Prof. Di Giovanni however, as the opening chapters in Paris reveals, relates her own experiences those universal human experiences that united to all of us. This very



The only Catholic church in Gaza, dedicated to the Holy Family, who would have passed this way on the Flight into Egypt.

all the history, politics and ambitions for power which she reports in the later chapters.

“In the past elections people saw the aging leaders of Al Fata as corrupt, so they voted for Hamas”

For once effective maps are provided and a timeline which serves as a reminder of how events in the places are placed in world history.

Effectively she suggests that Christianity is coming to an end in the Middle East. Those who can, the middle-class professionals, flee the countries finding homes in

America. But those who cannot fly remain, awaiting their fate with resignation. On page after page we can taste their fear.

She writes well about Egypt, Iraq and Syria, setting the headlines we all recall into a more human frame. But naturally I turned in writing this review to the chapter on Gaza. In these pages the contest between Al Fata and Hamas is illustrated. In the past elections people saw the aging leaders of Al Fata as corrupt, so they voted for Hamas.

Bewildering

Now with this bewildering excursion into Israel they have destroyed the chances of the original people of Gaza ever knowing peace.

the tightly controlled border crossings with Egypt and Israel made a sort of prison camp. Now it seems it is destined to be destroyed by an Israel seeking to strike back at Hamas for what has been done in Israel.

“I think it important this generation remembers,’ he told Prof. di Giovanni, ‘that we used to live together in the same house”

Prof. Di Giovanni writes as a western Christian, with a feeling for the of rites and rituals of the Faith. Hence she writes in a manner

impossible to more secular reporters, about what there is to witness of the ancient forms of Christianity.

Followers

"Palestinian Christians date back to the original followers of Christ. Of the nearly 47,000 Palestinian Christians still reside in Palestine, 98% live in the West Bank, a tiny fraction of the Christian community, between 800 and 1,000 people, lives in the besieged Gaza Strip, the poorest part of Palestine. Of all the communities I visited, their situation is the most precarious."

That was written in 2019. Today they would seem to have lost all hope of a future, thanks to Hamas.

She ends the book on remarks from an Egyptian friend recalling the 1970s when

sectarianism was not so rife. He thought the rights of Christians were assured. Then he lived in a shared household, part Muslim, part Christian. They laughed and shared jokes.

"I think it important this generation remembers," he told Prof. di Giovanni, "that we used to live together in the same house."

That dream of the shared house of the Middle East still pervades the minds, the hopes, and the prayers of many others.

On October 11 the Argentinian priest in charge of the only Catholic Church in Gaza (then stranded in the West Bank) spoke of his deep concerns. In asking for prayers for peace, he recalled a saying of Pope Pius XII, repeated by later Popes, that "nothing is lost with peace, everything is lost with war".

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

The unvanquished Christians of Ukraine



The faithful pray, perhaps for peace, in the Catholic Cathedral in Odessa.

J. Anthony Gaughan

The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing war have highlighted for many of us in Western Europe the fact that oppression and persecution have never been far from the people of Ukraine.

This is certainly the case with regard to religious persecution. Yet they have remained committed to their Christian Faith and have exhibited a remarkable resilience in doing so.

From my own experience of visiting the Ukraine in earlier years I can speak from personal observation.

Traditionally the two major Christian denominations in the country are the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Catholic or Uniate Church.

The former is centred mainly in the East and South, the latter to a certain extent in the North but mainly in the West. Between 1918 and 1991 (when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union) the Christian Churches were subjected to sustained, and at times savage suppression.

Definitive

In the definitive history of Christianity in the Ukraine the section dealing with the 20th Century is little more than a catalogue of the murder, imprisonment, and harassment of both Catholic and Orthodox priests and their fellow-Christians.

At the Papal Synod in Rome in 1974 Cardinal Josyf Slipyj, Patriarch of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, stated that the Ukrainian Church had sacrificed

“Priests faced a formidable challenge in their task of re-evangelisation in the new Ukraine. Over 70 years of Soviet social domination had left an oppressively materialistic ethos”

“mountains of bodies and rivers of blood”. He did not exaggerate.

The Soviet Union imploded in 1991. As a result, a number of central and eastern European countries became independent. Among them was the Ukraine. In the independent Ukraine religion was no longer outlawed and people were free to practise their religions.

And most of the churches, which had not been demolished under the communist regime, were handed back to their communities. Under the former regime they had been used as archives, concert halls, libraries, and for other various commercial purposes.

I have had personal experience of this scene. During a trip on the river Dnieper from Kyiv to Odessa in September 1997 I was able to witness how the Ukrainian Christians emerged into the public arena.

In the new situation people literally took the symbols of their religious faith out of their homes. Children brought icons to school and set them up in their classrooms. Bus drivers proudly displayed splendid icons in their buses. If a woman wore a necklace it invariably had a

large or small cross and, occasionally, men wore these also.

Formidable

Nonetheless priests faced a formidable challenge in their task of re-evangelisation in the new Ukraine. Over 70 years of Soviet social domination had left an oppressively materialistic ethos. Very few of the thousands of statues of Lenin throughout the country had been taken down from their plinths. Even after their dismissal from office, Communists managed to cause ongoing difficulties for Christians.

In 1946 the Soviet government handed over the churches of the Catholics in the Western Ukraine to the local Orthodox Church, mainly because the latter was more pliable in the face of State oppression. From 1991 Catholics had been reclaiming their churches. This led to serious acrimony and occasionally communal violence.

I visited the two Roman Catholic churches in Kyiv. The first was a very large Gothic-style cathedral on a main street. It had been substantially restored after World War II and, thereafter, used as a municipal concert hall, a large organ having been built in the sanctuary.

From 1991 the local Catholic community had the use of the church for weekend Masses. Through the week they had access to it during the day, but each evening it was used for concerts.

The other Catholic church in the city was an ‘active’ church. Built 150 years ago in the Greek style it was handed back in 1991 in a deplorable state, having been used as a general warehouse. However, it had been beautifully renovated and provided three Masses daily.

There were two Catholic churches in Odessa (now seized again by the Russians). Both of these were in a state of disrepair. I concelebrated Mass in the cathedral. It presented a sad spectacle and a sad story. Formerly a magnificent building as befitted a large and multi-cultural city, it was taken over by the Communists.

They destroyed or removed all the paintings, pictures and statues. The marble of the cathedral was taken to decorate a new railway station. The bodies of archbishops and other dignitaries buried in the cathedral were dug up and simply disposed of.

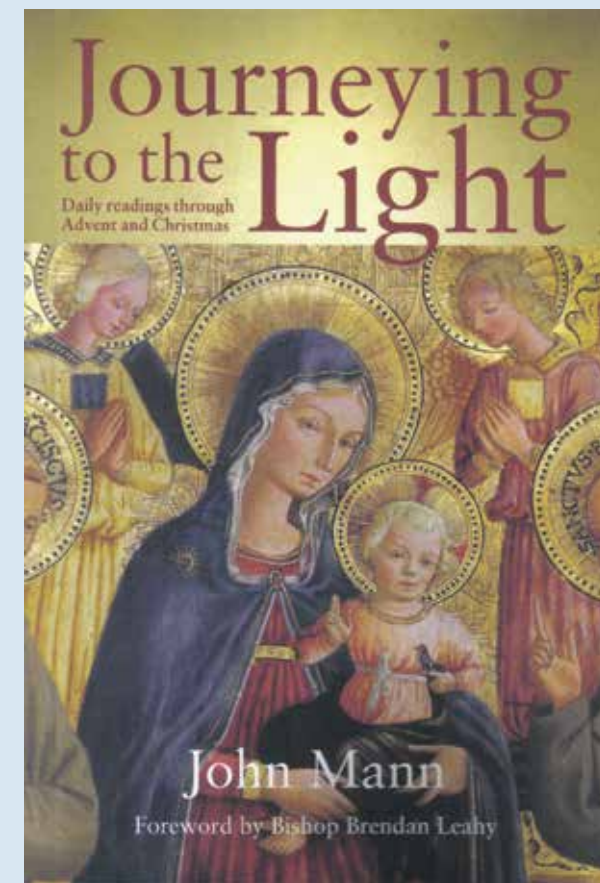
Two floors were added to the building and it was used as a sports hall until 1991. It had been only partially restored. As a result I found that Mass could be celebrated only in a side-chapel.

Large display boards were put to good use in the churches. They had a detailed presentation of the physical history of each church: the initial plans, early sketches, photos of them when they were used for other purposes, their dilapidated state when handed back, their ongoing re-building and refurbishment.

The parishioners and all and sundry were thus reminded of the oppression and persecution of the not very distant past. And no doubt such memories would explain the determination and the intensity with which Ukrainians rallied to the defence of their fatherland following the recent Russian invasion.

The Orthodox Ukrainians have effectively broken with the Patriarchate of Moscow to adhere to the more ancient and might one say more properly orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople in Istanbul in what is now Turkey. And so, sadly, global political affairs still interfere with religious life in Eastern Europe.

We should all think early about Christmas



Journey to the Light: Daily Readings through Advent and Christmas, by John Mann, foreword by Bishop Brendan Leahy (Messenger Publications, €12.95 / £11.95) **Advent and Christmas 2023**, from the website of Sacred Space (Messenger Publications, €7.95 / £6.95)

Peter Costello

Every year it has been customary for everyone to complain about Christmas “coming too soon”, as a plot to sell more goods, with Christmas puddings appearing in the shop already by mid-October.

We are right to bridle at these commercial aspects of the Christmas Season. Yet in a way we should always be thinking of Christmas coming, for it lays the ground work more than any other Church feasts, for what people warmly recall about their childhood and the beliefs they then so easily accepted, feeling them to be founded by familiar family joys.

Christmas expresses a love of others and feeling of self acceptance which we all need. This year alas it seems the coming weeks and months do not bode well for peace and love, so it really does us all no harm at all, to think forward, to anticipate as strongly as we can the Christmas message of peace and happiness and good will among all people.

The little Sacred Space booklet provides reading for each week of Advent, laid out under several headings. It gives each reader a straight forward devotional structure to the days of Advent and the season of Christmas. Time these days is so hectic and unstructured that any such scheme is a great book for settling or ordering one's own inner thoughts which many, perhaps most people will welcome.

John Mann was Dean of Belfast Cathedral, though he later lived at Swanage near Salisbury. Retired, he is now settled on the Isle of Man. His book takes a very personal approach to his pastoral observation, drawing greatly on his own varied life experiences. Reopening the book while writing this notice the page revealed describes his experience of visiting Catherine's Monastery and climbing Mount Sinai.

I opened the book by chance on a page where Mann is meditating on the nature of commandment and obedience. A very striking outcome of the application of a kind of *Sortes Sanctorum*.

But on that chance-chosen page he writes: “The power of commandment to inspire commitment as well as obedience is vital to our appreciation of how faith becomes devotion.”

Now there is truly ‘a thought for the day’. Filled with striking insights based on experience, this is a book to buy, read and, in time, reread.

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Leisure time



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Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model!"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

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www.mscmissions.ie

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call **Grace Kelly** on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

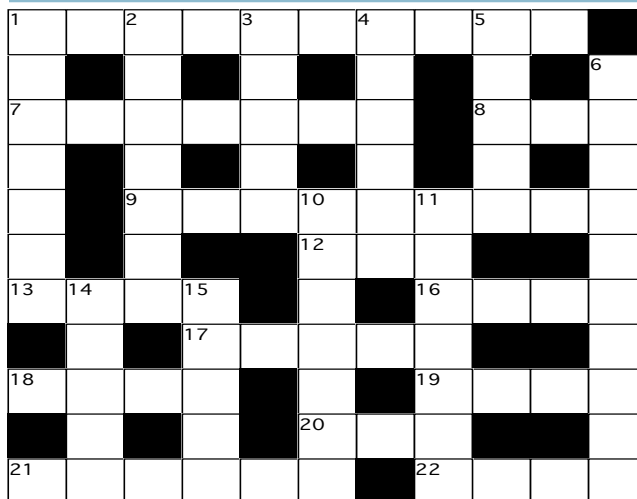
Email Anna Sadlier at anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188



www.hospicefoundation.ie

Crossword Junior

Gordius 505



Across

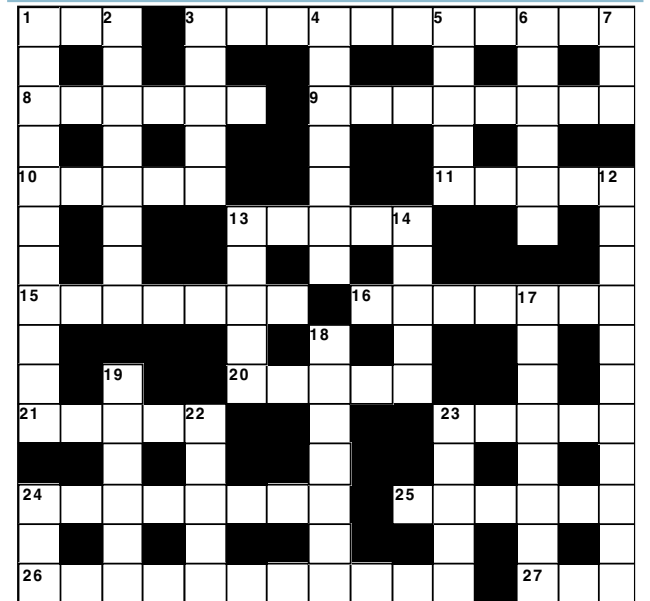
- 1 Sign saying the owner has left the shop to get a midday meal (3,2,5)
- 7 You could pluck it from a bird (7)
- 8 There was no room here the night Jesus was born (3)
- 9 Enniskillen is in this Ulster county (9)
- 12 Beer (3)
- 13 Wealthy (4)
- 16 This small bird is said to be the King of the Birds (4)
- 17 With time to spare (5)
- 18 Bart Simpson's saxophone-playing sister (4)
- 19 Above (4)
- 20 Make a mistake (3)
- 21 Ran after and tried to catch (6)
- 22 Gentle, considerate (4)

Down

- 1 A high-up member of the army (7)
- 2 Cars, lorries, buses etc, all together (7)
- 3 'Not that one, the _____ one' (5)
- 4 Imaginary, not truly there (6)
- 5 Beijing and Shanghai are in this Asian country (5)
- 6 The total you get by adding seventy and thirty (3,7)
- 10 Joined together in a wedding ceremony (7)
- 11 This American city is sometimes called 'The Big Apple' (3,4)
- 14 Coming from the Emerald Isle (5)
- 15 You might call this when a coin is tossed (5)

Crossword

Gordius 633



Across

- 1 Large breakfast roll (3)
- 3 Huge, circular fair-ground attraction (6,5)
- 8 Handy (6)
- 9 Edifice (8)
- 10 Great fear (5)
- 11 She is slender and graceful (5)
- 13 Hidden store (5)
- 15 Traditional Irish percussion instrument (7)
- 16 Small dwelling (7)
- 20 Gloomy, with little visibility (5)
- 21 Mar (5)
- 23 Unable to see (5)
- 24 They say it sweeps clean (3,5)
- 25 Pay no attention to disturbance in the region (6)
- 26 Retailer of cigarettes and similar products (11)
- 27 Asian beast of burden (3)

Down

- 1 Early form of musket (11)
- 2 Went or came before (8)
- 3 Liquid (5)
- 4 Biblical girl's name (7)
- 5 Promenades (5)
- 6 Suitable for eating (6)
- 7 Ship's diary (3)
- 12 Popular children's game (4,3,4)
- 13 March around the amulet (5)
- 14 & 17 1982 song about racial harmony performed by Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder (5,3,5)
- 18 Might the bin harm a Hindu class? (7)
- 19 Spider's creation (6)
- 22 This radio station plays much classical music (5)
- 23 Prejudiced person (5)
- 24 Fruit with a hard shell (3)

SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 12

GORDIUS NO. 632

- Across** - 1 Fob 3 Garbage cans 8 Edison 9 Buddhist 10 Gleam 11 Roads 13 Weeds 15 Indoors 16 Trieste 20 H-bomb 21 Steal 23 Brief 24 Hornpipe 25 Rapier 26 Breeze block 27 Got
- Down** - 1 Fledgelings 2 Bride and groom 4 Bubbles 5 Eider 6 Animal 7 Sat 12 Safety first 13 Worth 14 Shrub 17 Striking 18 Conceal 19 Decree 22 La Paz 23 Black 24 Hob

CHILDREN'S No. 504

- Across** - 1 Remember 5 Danube 6 Tide 7 Achill 9 Grin 10 Eire 12 September 15 Rat 16 Daily 17 Strange 18 Ranch
- Down** - 1 Radiator 2 Manchester 3 Mobile phone 4 Bedtime 8 Lit 9 Gem 11 Reader 13 Brian 14 Ray

Sudoku Corner

505

Easy

	3	5		4	1	6	2	9
					3			7
	8					5	4	3
			6					8
	2	9		8		3	7	
8					9			
3	9	8					1	
1			5					
5	7	4	1	3		2	9	

Hard

		8	7	3		4	6	
					2		7	8
				9	7			
8						4		
4	1						8	3
			3					9
					1	6		
6		1		9				
		5	8		2	1	3	

Last week's Easy 504

1	3	7	4	8	5	2	9	6
2	6	8	1	7	9	3	5	4
5	4	9	2	3	6	8	7	1
9	8	4	5	2	7	6	1	3
6	5	1	8	4	3	9	2	7
3	7	2	9	6	1	4	8	5
7	2	3	6	5	8	1	4	9
4	9	5	3	1	2	7	6	8
8	1	6	7	9	4	5	3	2

Last week's Hard 504

1	7	3	4	9	2	5	6	8
9	6	2	8	5	1	3	7	4
8	5	4	7	3	6	1	9	2
6	2	7	1	8	4	9	5	3
3	4	9	6	7	5	2	8	1
5	1	8	9	2	3	7	4	6
7	9	1	2	6	8	4	3	5
4	3	6	5	1	7	8	2	9
2	8	5	3	4	9	6	1	7



Fr Billy Swan

Notebook

Priests and priesthood of all the baptised

From November 18-19 this year, St Patrick's College Maynooth will host a vocations 'Come and See' weekend, organised by the National Vocations Office. All of the places available have been booked. While it is important not to get too carried away at this early stage, it is definitely a sign of hope and evidence of the Spirit at work in the lives of people discerning their future.



A newly ordained Catholic priest is thrown into the air by friends and family after ordination, outside Milan's Duomo Cathedral, June 10, 2023. Photo: OSV News

Development

What is interesting to observe is that this development is taking place at a time when lay ministry and the dignity of all the baptised have never been emphasised as much, certainly here in Ireland. This focus on the call of baptism comes at a time of fewer priests but ought to have happened much sooner, irrespective of the pastoral needs that are emerging now that priests are scarce. For some, this elevation of the dignity of all the Baptised and the importance of lay ministry comes with a fear of diminishing the importance of the ministry of priests. There is a concern that if we widen the understanding of

vocation to all the baptised then the uniqueness of a vocation to the priesthood is undermined or diluted at best.

Yet, the small green shoot of the numbers signed up for the vocations weekend would seem to suggest the opposite is happening. Namely, that the renewal of priestly ministry and priestly identity is happening within and not apart from the renewal of the whole Church. Here is another wonderful paradox of the Spirit's work described beautifully by Pope St John Paul II when he wrote on priestly formation in 1992: "The more the laity's own sense of vocation is deepened, the more

what is proper to the priest stands out" (para. 3).

Could it be that this is what is happening? Could it be that a new cohort of men are being attracted to the priesthood because of the greater closeness of priests and people now working and witnessing together? Let's hope so, but the signs are good. Many priests I know speak of this time as a time of challenge and yet hope where the laity are finally beginning to be co-responsible for the life and mission of the Church. Many priests describe this as a time when they feel more supported and less isolated than in the past.

Principle

In keeping with the traditional Catholic principle of 'both/and' instead of 'either/or', what's important to avoid is any impression that the Church's future depends on either lay people or priests. It must be a case of laity and priests witnessing and working in close proximity, where the ministerial priesthood is organically ordered to and is at the service of the priesthood of all the bap-

tised. Faithful priests confirm the deepest faith instincts of all the baptised and the faith of the people remind us priests why we are priests in the first place. Our vocation as priests is to help you be priests, prophets and kings.


Wisdom from Yves Congar

Yves Congar (1904-1995) was a French Dominican theologian who was influential at the Second Vatican Council and whose writings are often quoted by Pope Francis. In 1968, he published a book entitled *True and False Reform in the Church* which is essential reading for all involved in Church at a changing time. In the book, he notes that, in the light of history, "reforms that have succeeded within the Church are those which have been made with concern for the concrete need of souls, in a pastoral perspective, aiming for holiness". Wise words that direct us back to basics. Our religion is people centred and directed to God's glory.


Original blessing

Traditionally, the doctrine of 'original sin' has loomed large in the Church especially in the celebration of sacraments like baptism and Reconciliation. Yet perhaps we don't talk enough about 'original blessing'. For a number of Sundays recently, the readings spoke of vineyards and banquets, symbols of places where human beings are called to flourish and be blessed by the goodness of creation and God's very life. This was God's plan for us from the beginning. It still is. So let the celebration of everything that is good, true and beautiful be at the heart of our Catholic Faith. Yes, we are tainted by original sin but made for original blessing.





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PLEASE HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN

Fr Eamonn Gowing is a Redemptorist priest working in a favela/shanty town in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He reports of the great poverty there and how more than 200 children benefit from a feeding programme he has started which provides a nutritious meal each day. For many of the children it is the only regular meal they receive. Fr Eamonn is one of the many missionaries The Little Way Association supports with funds to feed hungry children.

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MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

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- €..... **HUNGRY NEEDY CHILDREN**
- €..... **WELLS AND WATER**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state no.)
(We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass)
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Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)

Address

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IC/10/19